

Farms and Villages in Byzantine Palestine

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INTRODUCTION

The economy of the western Roman Empire in late antiquity, and later in the Middle Ages, was based on large agricultural estates. In the Roman East, however, there is a good deal of literary and archaeological evidence for the existence of a small farm- and village-based economy. The economic prosperity of the villages in the eastern provinces, which had begun to take root in the Hellenistic period, continued throughout the Byzantine period, from the fourth to the seventh century C.E. This phenomenon, according to Averil Cameron, “remains one of the most striking features of the eastern provinces in late antiquity.”¹

Palestine was part of this phenomenon. Rural settlements covered the entire map of Byzantine Palestine, including hitherto unsettled regions, and their remains are largely evident in the various domestic and agricultural installations devised by the rural population.

This study attempts to answer a number of questions: Is there one or more types of rural settlement in the region? Do we have a model of a typical farm? Is there archaeological evidence for the existence of large landowners alongside small farmers which may enhance what we already know from the literary sources? Are the various types of settlements adapted to the many environmental zones and ethnoreligious groups of the country? Further questions deal with the nature of the rural settlements: Does the archaeological evidence reflect the intervention of authorities in settlement patterns or distribution? Were the Byzantine villages in Palestine “rural” by nature or were they influenced by the infiltration of urban elements? Does rural construction reflect a certain type of society,

A substantial number of architectural redrawings were made in order to standardize their graphic representations. Most of the drawings are based on several sources, and in these cases the most prominent one is acknowledged. I wish to thank Tania Gornstein, who executed the drawings with great skill. I should also like to thank the anonymous readers of this article for their useful suggestions for its improvement. It should be noted that, with few exceptions, the spelling of toponyms is based on that of the *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land*, ed. E. Stern, 4 vols. (Jerusalem, 1993), hereafter *NEAEHL*.

¹A. Cameron, *The Later Roman Empire, A.D. 284–430* (London, 1993), 180. On the prosperity of rural settlements in the eastern provinces of the empire in late antiquity, see A. H. M. Jones, *The Later Roman Empire*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1964), I, 713; E. Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique et pauvreté sociale à Byzance, 4e–7e siècles* (Paris, 1977), 236–37; A. Poulter, “Townships and Villages,” in *The Roman World*, ed. J. Wachter, 2 vols. (London-New York, 1987), II, 407–9; F. Millar, *The Roman Near East, 31 BC–AD 337* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1993), 251–53.

and does it in any way point to a connection between the village and the urban government center? The present study does not seek to answer all of these questions; to do so would entail a large-scale, interdisciplinary research project.

Despite the importance of the subject, no comprehensive archaeological study of farms and villages in Byzantine Palestine has been published to date. There are a number of studies on the subject, but they are limited in content and scope. Notable among these are the studies by Zeev Yeivin and Claudine Dauphin of Galilee and the Golan, which are based on an archaeological survey of Roman-Byzantine villages in these regions;² Ballermino Bagatti's three-volume *Antichi villaggi cristiani*, containing an eclectic collection of finds attesting to Christian presence in Palestine;³ and Shimon Dar's thorough survey of western Samaria.⁴ Each of these works has contributed significantly to our knowledge of the subject; however, a comprehensive and systematic archaeological study, such as those undertaken by the French archaeologists in northern Syria and the Hauran,⁵ is a desideratum.

The absence of a comprehensive archaeological study is especially pronounced in light of the abundance of information retrieved from excavations and surveys of Byzantine villages and farms in Palestine that has been published in recent years. This material, of course, does not always reach us in its optimal form, that is, in detailed excavation reports; in fact, with the exception of Eric Meyers' studies of Upper Galilee and Shimon

²Z. Yeivin's survey was conducted in the framework of his unpublished study, "Survey of Settlements in Galilee and the Golan from the Period of the Mishnah in Light of the Sources" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1971, in Hebrew). Partial findings were published in a later article: "On the 'Medium-Sized City,'" *Eretz-Israel* (Avi-Yonah vol.) 19 (Jerusalem, 1987), 59–71 (in Hebrew), with additional bibliography. In recent years, Claudine Dauphin has continued Yeivin's work of conducting surveys in the Golan. Preliminary reports of the Golan survey, under Dauphin's direction, have been published in a number of forms; see C. M. Dauphin, "Jewish and Christian Communities in the Roman and Byzantine *Gaulanitis*: A Study of Evidence from Archaeological Surveys," *PEQ* 114 (1982), 129–42; C. M. Dauphin and J. J. Schonfield, "Settlements of the Roman and Byzantine Periods on the Golan Heights," *IEJ* 33 (1983), 189–206; C. M. Dauphin and S. Gibson, "Ancient Settlements in Their Landscapes: The Results of Ten Years of Survey on the Golan Heights (1978–1988)," *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 12 (1992–93), 7–31. Dauphin is preparing a large catalogue of all the Byzantine sites in Palestine; see an early review of this project by the author, "Le catalogue des sites byzantins de la Palestine: Buts, méthodes et limites d'une étude démographique," *Eretz-Israel* (Avi-Yonah vol.) 19 (Jerusalem, 1987), 2–9.

³B. Bagatti's three volumes—*Antichi villaggi cristiani di Galilea* (Jerusalem, 1971); *Antichi villaggi cristiani di Samaria* (Jerusalem, 1979); and *Antichi villaggi cristiani di Giudea e Neghev* (Jerusalem, 1983)—contain a disorganized hodgepodge of archaeological information and are thus of little scientific value. These volumes are soon to appear in English translation.

⁴The survey of western Samaria provides information for both the Roman and Byzantine periods; see S. Dar, *Landscape and Pattern: An Archaeological Survey of Samaria, 800 B.C.E.–636 C.E.*, BAR International Series 308, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1986).

⁵The most famous is the work of G. Tchalenko, *Villages antiques de la Syrie du nord*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1953–55), on the villages in northern Syria; however, see the recent detailed study by G. Tate, *Les campagnes de la Syrie du nord du II^e au VII^e siècles*, I (Paris, 1992), where he heavily criticizes Tchalenko's study. On the high quality of Tate's work, see C. Foss, "The Near Eastern Countryside in Late Antiquity: A Review Article," in *The Roman and Byzantine Near East: Some Recent Archaeological Research*, ed. J. H. Humphrey (Ann Arbor, 1995), 218–23. Studies of the Hauran, and especially those of F. Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans le Hauran antique (I^{er} siècle av. J.-C.–VII^e siècle ap. J.-C.): Une approche," appear in *Hauran*, ed. J.-M. Dentzer, I (Paris, 1985), 63–136.

Dar's exhaustive survey of Umm Rihan in Samaria, we do not have a single scientific report of excavations of a Byzantine village in Palestine.⁶ We must therefore make do with preliminary reports published from time to time in various archaeological journals, such as the Israel Antiquities Authority's *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* or, as it is called in its English edition, *Excavations and Surveys in Israel*, a gold mine of up-to-date information from the field, containing preliminary reports of salvage excavations which, due to the accelerated rate of land development taking place in Israel today, are the bulk of excavations carried out in the country. The recently published *New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* is invaluable for its current and accessible data.⁷

However, the most significant contribution to the study of rural settlement in Palestine was made by the Israel Antiquities Authority's comprehensive, bilingual publication of its Archaeological Survey of Israel. Each of its more than twenty volumes, which is accompanied by dozens of plans and photographs, surveys a map of 100 km² containing dozens to hundreds of sites, the majority of which were unknown to us until now. The Survey team invested one to one and one-half years of systematic work in charting the length and breadth of each map. The author was personally involved in this project when conducting the survey of the map of Herodium.⁸

However, despite the intrinsic value of such a project, the Survey data must be used cautiously and selectively; the majority of sites in the fertile area of Palestine (the nonarid regions) span a number of chronological periods, making it impossible for the surveyors to date the remains with precision.⁹ Moreover, the very general nature of the data obtained from these regions to a large extent mars their scientific value. However, the Survey maps of the desert regions are an exception to this rule. In the peripheral areas of the Judean and Negev deserts particularly, hundreds of sites were surveyed which, according to the finds, began and ended their existence in the Byzantine–early Islamic period.¹⁰ The relatively accurate dating of these sites, most of which are part of the

⁶For the final archaeological reports of ancient Meiron, see E. M. Meyers, J. F. Strange, and C. L. Meyers, *Excavations at Ancient Meiron, Upper Galilee, Israel, 1971–72, 1974–75, 1977* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981), and for Khirbet Shema', see E. M. Meyers, A. T. Kraabel, and J. F. Strange, *Ancient Synagogue Excavations at Khirbet Shema', Upper Galilee, Israel, 1970–1972, AASOR 42* (1976). For the survey of Umm Rihan, see S. Dar, Z. Safrai, and Y. Tepper, *Umm Rihan: A Village of the Mishna* (Tel Aviv, 1986, in Hebrew).

⁷The encyclopedia contains more than 365 entries written by 205 archaeologists. It is the most comprehensive publication of recent archaeological discoveries in Israel.

⁸Y. Hirschfeld, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Herodium (108/2)* (Jerusalem, 1985). For the value of the survey in the Negev desert of Israel, see Foss, "Countryside," 230.

⁹On the methodological difficulties in dating on the basis of survey findings, see Y. Tsafrir, "Some Notes on the Settlement and Demography of Palestine in the Byzantine Period: The Archaeological Evidence," in *Retrieving the Past: Essays on Archaeological Research and Methodology in Honor of Gus W. Van Beek*, ed. J. D. Seger (Winona Lake, Ind., 1996), 271–75. The results of these difficulties are examined in the survey done by M. Gichon in southern Israel; see I. Shatzman, *The Armies of the Hasmonaeans and Herod* (Tübingen, 1991), 246 n. 100, and additional bibliography there. See also D. Homès-Frédéricq, General Introduction to "Sites and Settlements in Jordan," in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, ed. S. Tell, IV (Amman, 1992), 46.

¹⁰On the debate regarding the dating of the Byzantine sites in the Negev highlands, I prefer the suggestion made by G. Avni, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Har Saggi—Northeast (225)* (Jerusalem, 1992), 19*–20*, who dates the emergence of these settlements to the late Byzantine period (6th–early 7th centuries C.E.) on the basis of typical Byzantine pottery (including fragments of imported vessels) found there. M. Haiman's suggestion ("An Early Islamic Period Farm at Nahal Mitnan in the Negev Highlands," *'Atiqot* 26 [1995], 9) to date the "Byzantine" farmsteads of the southern Negev to the early Arab period (7th–8th

agricultural hinterland of the region, gives these Survey maps of the desert regions a great degree of scientific value. To date, twelve maps of the desert regions have been published: three from the Judean desert east of Jerusalem and nine from the Negev desert extending from the Beersheba Valley southward to the central Negev highlands. The large amount of information obtained from these maps allows us to form conclusions based on quantitative analysis of the material, similar to the method employed by Georges Tate in northern Syria.

This study is confined to the farms and villages of the fourth to mid-seventh centuries C.E. located within the present boundaries of modern-day Israel.¹¹ Therefore, I have not included a number of important sites, such as Capernaum and Mampsis, the construction of which is primarily Roman, or other sites, such as Meiron and Khirbet Shema', which, according to the excavation results, had ceased to exist in the fourth and early fifth centuries C.E., respectively.¹² I have included in my discussion only purely Byzantine sites that have been dated according to the results of reliable surveys and excavations.

The types of agricultural sites in Palestine, as in neighboring provinces, are diverse, ranging from large or small single farms, to groups of farms combined to form small villages or hamlets, to medium- and large-sized villages scattered throughout the country.¹³ This variety is also expressed in the literary sources. A single agricultural farm—ἐποίκιον (*epoikion*), κτήμα (*ktēma*), or χωρίον (*chōrion*)—refers to landed property and includes the farm or estate of one person. In the course of the Byzantine period, the meaning of these terms was broadened to include entire villages, implying that villages at times were the property of one individual. For example, Procopius of Caesarea informs us that a rhetor named Evangelus purchased the village of Porphyreon near Mount Carmel for a large sum of money.¹⁴

centuries) is, in my estimation, based upon the late finds on the floors representing the period in which their use ended and not when it began. See also M. Haiman, "Agriculture and Nomad-State Relations in the Negev Desert in the Byzantine and Early Islamic Periods," *BASOR* 297 (1995), 34–35.

¹¹An up-to-date map of Byzantine Palestine appears in Y. Tsafrir, L. Di Segni, and J. Green, *Tabula Imperii Romani, Iudaea-Palaestina: Eretz Israel in the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Periods, Maps and Gazetteer* (Jerusalem, 1994), 17. The regions from Transjordan to the Dead Sea, the 'Arava Valley, and Sinai are not discussed in this article. On the other hand, western Galilee is included although this region was part of the province of Phoenicia.

¹²Meiron and Khirbet Shema' flourished in the late Roman period. According to the excavations, Meiron ceased to exist in the second half of the 4th century and Khirbet Shema' at the beginning of the 5th century; see E. M. Meyers, "Byzantine Towns of the Galilee," in *City, Town and Countryside in the Early Byzantine Era*, ed. R. L. Hohlfelder (New York, 1982), 115–32; idem, "Meiron," in *NEAEHL*, III, 1024–27; "Shema', Khirbet," IV, 1359–61.

¹³A diverse settlement pattern is known in Jordan (M. Piccirillo, "Rural Settlements in Byzantine Jordan," in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, ed. A. Hadidi, II [Amman, 1985], 257–58), in the Hauran (Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale," 76), and in northern Syria as well (Tate, *Campaigns*, 209). A wide range of definitions of settlements appears in the sources dealing with Asia Minor; see T. R. S. Broughton, "Roman Asia Minor," in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. T. Frank, IV (New York, 1975), 628–29.

¹⁴Procopius of Caesarea, *Anecdota* 30.19, in *Secret History*, ed. H. B. Dewing (London, 1954), 354. On private villages in the Roman East, see G. M. Harper, "Village Administration in the Roman Province of Syria," *YCS* 1 (1928), 160–62. On the broadened meaning of the term *ktēmata*, from a single estate to an actual village, see Y. Dan, "The Social Reality in Eretz Israel during the Byzantine Period, 6th–7th Centuries"

In a late document from early-tenth-century Asia Minor, we come across another term for a group of farmhouses, ἀγρίδιον (*agridion* = small field), which is basically a small village (Eng. hamlet; Fr. *hameau*). Despite its late date, we should not doubt the meaning of this term since this very same document describes in detail the process by which a hamlet was created and the reasons leading to this phenomenon.¹⁵ The conventional term used to denote villages inhabited by independent farmers is κῶμαι (*kōmai*); these were the majority of villages in Palestine. Larger villages were called simply κῶμαι μεγίσται (*kōmai megistai*) or κῶμαι μεγάλαι (*kōmai megalai*).¹⁶

In his *Onomasticon*, Eusebius makes a clear distinction between *kōmai* (medium-sized villages) and *kōmai megistai* (large villages). He further distinguishes between the πολίχνη (*polichnē*, small city) and the full-fledged πόλις (*polis*). In his basic research, Peter Thomsen enumerates in Eusebius' *Onomasticon* 34 cities, 5 towns, 35 large villages, and 155 regular villages, a total of 229 settlements.¹⁷ The ratio of rural to urban settlements is interesting: 83 percent are large and small villages as opposed to 17 percent that are large and small cities. This ratio emphasizes the intensity of rural settlement in Palestine, the scope of which, as we shall see below, increased in the course of the Byzantine period.

(Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 1972, in Hebrew), 207–14. The term *epoikion* in the sense of private estate appears on a stone from the time of Diocletian near the Panaeas border in northern Palestine; see B. W. Bacon, "A New Inscription from Upper Galilee," *AJA* 11 (1907), 317. The Greek term *epoikion* for private property appears in some inscriptions in Syria; see D. Feissel, "Remarques de toponymie syrienne d'après des inscriptions grecques chrétiennes trouvées hors de Syrie," *Syria* 59 (1982), 334. According to Jones (*Later Roman Empire*, II, 788), the broadened meaning of the term *epoikia*, from estate to small village, stems from the process of concentrating laborers on agricultural estates in order to bring them closer to the fields they worked. On the term *chōrion*, see M. Kaplan, *Les hommes et la terre à Byzance du VI^e au XI^e siècles* (Paris, 1992), 95–99.

¹⁵The translation of this document appears in C. Brand, "Two Byzantine Treatises on Taxation," *Traditio* 25 (1969), 49–50, as well as in an anthology of sources on the history of Byzantium by D. J. Geanakoplos, *Byzantium: Church, Society, and Civilization Seen through Contemporary Eyes* (Chicago-London, 1984), 234–35. For a discussion of the creation of satellite villages in the Byzantine period, see Z. Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (London-New York, 1994), 69–75.

¹⁶For the term *kōmai* in general, the basic study is G. Dagron, "Entre village et cité: La bourgade rurale des IV^e–VII^e siècles en Orient," *Koinonia* 3 (1979), 29–52. On the term *kōmē* as a village of independent farmers, see C. Dauphin, "Les 'Komai' de Palestine," *PrOC* 37 (1987), 251–67; Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*, 241–42; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 89–93. Another term referring to a large village with urban features is κομπολις (*kōmopolis*); see E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)*, II (Edinburgh, 1979), 188–89. This term is also known from the literary sources of Asia Minor; see Broughton, "Roman Asia Minor," 629. Another term for large villages is μητροκωμιαί (*mētrokōmīai*) from epigraphical sources from the Hauran and Syria only; see Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale," 76; M. Sartre, "Villes et villages du Hauran (Syrie) au IV^e siècle," in *Sociétés urbaines, sociétés rurales dans l'Asie Mineure et la Syrie hellénistiques et romaines*, ed. E. Frésouls (Strasbourg, 1987), 239–58; H. I. MacAdam, *Studies in the History of the Roman Province of Arabia: The Northern Sector*, BAR International Series 295 (Oxford, 1986), 84–85, and J. D. Grainger, "'Village Government' in Roman Syria and Arabia," *Levant* 27 (1995), 180–81, for the Hauran; and Tate, *Campaigns*, 270, for Syria. On boundary stones between villages in the Golan, see Y. Aharoni, "Three New Boundary-Stones from the Western Golan," *Atiqot* 1 (1955), 109–14; idem, "Two Additional Boundary-Stones from the Hule Valley," *ibid.*, 2 (1959), 152–54; idem, "Three New Boundary-Stones from the Hule Valley," *ibid.*, 3 (1961), 186–87.

¹⁷P. Thomsen, "Palästina nach dem Onomastikon des Eusebius," *ZDPV* 26 (1903), 155–59. Eusebius uses the same terms for the villages in Jordan; see Piccirillo, "Rural Settlements," 260.

Rabbinic law, which reflects with precision the reality in Roman-Byzantine Palestine, makes a clear distinction between city (Heb. *kerakh*; pl. *kerakhim*), which parallels *polis*, and village, which is sometimes termed *kfr* (or perhaps *kefar*; pl. *kefarim*) or *ir* (pl. *'ayyarot*).¹⁸ As most of the Jewish population of Palestine resided in the villages, the sages needed to distinguish between large villages (*'ayyarot gedolot*), medium-sized villages (*'ayyarot benoni-yot*), and small villages (Aram. *kufarnaya daqiqaya*).¹⁹

As we shall see below, the large villages of the Byzantine period stretched over many acres, yet nevertheless were called “villages.” For example, the Nessana papyri explicitly call Nessana a village (*kōmē*) in the city district of Elusa.²⁰ It therefore seems to me that Nessana, like its desert sisters—Rehovot, Sobota (Shivta), and Oboda (*'Avdat*)—should be understood as a large village, and not a town, a term that is loosely used by most scholars of the Negev.²¹

The Madeba map offers an exceptional picture of the wide variety of settlements that

¹⁸Safrai, *Economy*, 17–19. The Talmudic term *ir*, meaning “village,” has created much confusion in modern scholarship, because in modern Hebrew this term means “city” or “town.” An extreme example of this is Yeivin’s article (“On the ‘Medium-Sized City’”), in which he does not make a single reference to the word “village,” despite the fact that this is the subject of his article! As a result, the author reaches a series of erroneous conclusions, I believe, with regard to the planning and internal organization of the villages. Additional misconceptions derive from the Mishnaic term *ir shel yahid*, signifying large private estates belonging to Jews primarily in the early Roman period; see S. Applebaum, “Economic Life in Palestine,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century*, ed. S. Safrai and M. Stern (Philadelphia, 1976), 641–42. For archaeological evidence of these types of estates, see Y. Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Roman-Byzantine Period* (Jerusalem, 1995), 51–55. As discussed below, the term *ir* was a universal one in the late Roman and Byzantine periods, as the Jewish community preferred to concentrate in cities and villages. Another term that may cause confusion is *'ayyara*, which in modern Hebrew means “town.” This term is never mentioned in rabbinic literature and has its origin in Yiddish literature of 17th–18th-century eastern Europe. Nevertheless, Applebaum (“Economic Life,” 641) notes that *ajarah* (his transliteration) appears among the terms used for “settlement” in rabbinic literature.

¹⁹For *'ayyarot gedolot*, see *J. Megillah* 1, 70a; for *'ayyarot benoni-yot* and *'ayyarot gedolot*, see *J. Makkot*, 2, 7, 31b; for *kufarnaya daqiqaya* (“small villages”), see *J. Berakhot* 1, 2a. The major discussion of this subject is S. Krauss, “Ha-Krach, ha-r' ve-ha-Kfar ba-Talmud,” *He-'atid* 3 (1929), 1–50 (in Hebrew).

²⁰C. J. Kraemer, *Excavations at Nessana*, III: *Non-Literary Papyri* (Princeton, 1958), doc. nos. 16 (p. 47), 17 (p. 53), 18 (p. 56), 24 (p. 78), 27 (p. 85). On the status of Elusa and its extensive territory, which includes the central Negev, see R. Rubin, *The Negev as a Settled Land* (Jerusalem, 1990, in Hebrew), 25–26.

²¹The expression “towns of the Negev,” which was adopted by scholars with respect to the large Negev settlements in the Byzantine period, was probably influenced by the title, “The Byzantine Towns,” that C. L. Woolley and T. E. Lawrence gave to chapter 5 of their book, *The Wilderness of Zin* (London, 1914), 72 ff, despite the fact that both the sources and archaeological research have shown otherwise. Rubin (*Negev*, 7) presents the problem that “the name ‘cities’ does not suit all six of the introverted settlements . . . and nevertheless,” he writes, “we shall use the term ‘cities’ that has been used already in studies treating the subject.” I do not think this is the correct approach. I agree with Clive Foss (“Countryside,” 225) that “these [the large settlements of the Negev, except Elusa] were not cities at all, and treating them as such can lead to serious misconceptions.”

Because of the importance of the large Negev settlements to the distinction between city and large village, it is of value to list the areas of these settlements as accurately as possible. The following table (in acres) records estimations by M. Broshi, “The Population of Western Palestine in the Roman-Byzantine Period,” *BASOR* 236 (1979), 2–3; J. Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements in the Negev Desert, Beer-Sheva*, V (Beer-sheva, 1991), 204, table 16; and Y. Hirschfeld, based on a critical measurement of the plans accompanying Shereshevski’s book; my calculation includes only the area of the settlement itself, without the public buildings (e.g., churches and bathhouses) found outside the settlement limits.

characterized Byzantine Palestine (Fig. 1).²² Gaza appears as a fortified *polis* alongside many smaller villages. In contrast, Iamnia (Yavneh) is defined by Eusebius in his *Onomasticon* as a “small city” (*polichnē*); in the Madeba map it is shown without a wall, yet larger than the nearby village, that is, a transitional type between the city and the village.

SURVEY OF THE SITES

Golan Heights

I begin this survey of rural settlements in the uppermost northern region of modern-day Israel (Fig. 2). Shimon Dar surveyed sixty-four different sites on the southern slopes of Mount Hermon; archaeological excavations were conducted at several of these sites, the results of which he has compiled and recently published.²³ These sites may be labeled “the highest sites of the country,” as the area over which they are spread rises 900–2,000 m above sea level (the remains of seasonal habitation were found only above 1,500 m). The area is very hilly, difficult to reach, and rich in natural vegetation due to an average annual rainfall of about 1,500 mm. An interesting point emerging from Dar’s study is that, in the remote settlements of Mount Hermon, idol worship continued to be practiced well into the Byzantine period, with the intensive use of small temples and cult sites that had originated in the Roman period; not a single church was found in the area surveyed.²⁴

ESTIMATED AREA OF LARGE NEGEV SETTLEMENTS (IN HECTARES)

	Broshi	Shereshevski	Hirschfeld	Remarks
Elusa	35.0	39.0	60.1*	
Rehovot	12.0	10.3	10.8	not including northern church and bathhouse
Nessana	10.0	17.0	8.0	not including acropolis
Sobota	11.5	8.0	8.0	
Oboda	—	8.5	7.0	not including bathhouse
Mampsis	4.0	4.2	3.7	not including khan
Sa’adon	—	2.5	2.8	

*The reasons for this disparity in the estimated area of Elusa are not clear.

The enormous dimensions of Elusa, according to this table, reinforce its special urban status in the Negev; in contrast, Rehovot may be classified with Nessana, Sobota, and Oboda as large villages. Mampsis and Sa’adon, the area of which is less than 4 ha, are categorized as regular villages. In sum, we may conclude, albeit with great caution and with a margin of deviance on both ends (as in the case of Rehovot), that the area that differentiates a large village from a small city is 10 ha, i.e., a settlement of more than 10 ha should be considered, in most cases, an urban settlement.

²²M. Avi-Yonah, *The Madeba Mosaic Map* (Jerusalem, 1953; repr. from *Eretz-Israel* 2), 6–7, and recently, in exceptionally clear photographs, in M. Piccirillo, *The Mosaics of Jordan* (Amman, 1993), 56–75. On the diversity of the settlements in Byzantine Palestine, see J. Patrich, “Church, State and the Transformation of Palestine: The Byzantine Period (324–640 CE),” in *The Archaeology of Society in the Holy Land*, ed. T. E. Levy (London, 1994), 473.

²³S. Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites on Mt. Hermon, Israel*, BAR International Series 589 (Oxford, 1993); idem, “The History of the Hermon Settlements,” *PEQ* 120 (1988), 26–44.

²⁴This phenomenon, i.e., the continuation of paganism in the rural settlement, is common throughout the empire; see G. Dagron, *Vie et miracles de sainte Thècle* (Brussels, 1978), 80. See also P. Chuvin, *A Chronicle of the Last Pagans* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1990), 115–18, and F. R. Trombley, *Hellenic Religion and Christianization c. 370–529*, II (Leiden, 1994), 340–74. I wish to thank Bruria Biton-Ashkeloni of the Hebrew University, who brought these sources to my attention.

I shall mention only two sites on Mount Hermon—Bir an-Sobah, situated 1.5 km northwest of the Druze village of Majdel Shams, and the remains of a farmhouse near Naḥal Govta—both of which are dated by their excavations to the Byzantine period.

Bir an-Sobah (map coord. 2212.2978; 1,350 m above sea level) lies on a high, narrow ridge and stretches over an area of 1.25 ha. Between fifteen and twenty dwellings were registered (Fig. 3), and a cult site, water cisterns, industrial installations, burial caves, paths, and farmland were identified.²⁵ Bir an-Sobah may be defined as a small village built on the slope facing southeast (Fig. 4). Its orientation is not coincidental, as the village thus avoided the cold winds usually blowing from the north and northwest. The houses of the village are randomly scattered and conform to the topography, with an average distance of about 10 m between the houses. The dwellings are quite simple; most of them are one-room structures, rectangular or square, and average 40 m². The walls of the houses are built of large stone courses (with an average width of 0.7 m) containing no binding materials. Various industrial installations were found along the fringes of the settlement (an oil press at its southern end and a furnace for the production of metal at its northern end), and a cult site containing a small shrine (*naiskos*) stood at its highest point (Fig. 5), as was common elsewhere in the region. The villagers' main sources of livelihood were farming (including olive culture), goat herding, and apparently also mining and metal (lead) and kohl production (for cosmetic and medicinal purposes).

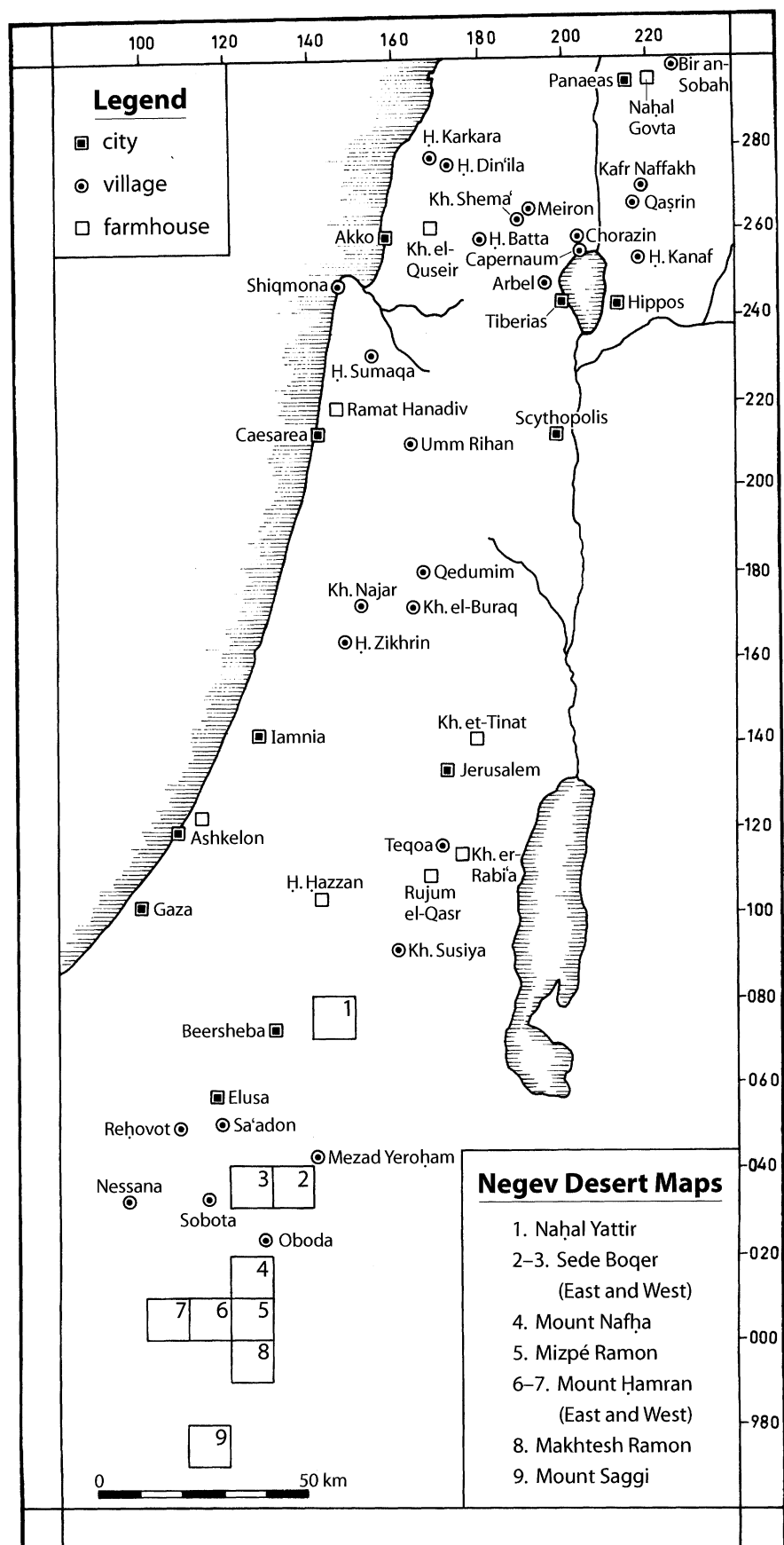
The farmhouse on the southern bank of Naḥal Govta (map coord. 2182.2962) lies on a small mountain range rising 900 m above sea level. This is a typical complex of Roman-Byzantine Palestine, measuring about 800 m², the excavation of which has uncovered a tower, a courtyard, and an animal pen next to the dwelling unit (Fig. 6).²⁶ West of the farmhouse, a plot of worked farmland stretches over an area of 0.2–0.3 ha. The dwelling used by the family of farmers is rectangular (Fig. 7); its walls are built of large stones, and its entrance faces west into the courtyard. The interior of the dwelling (45 m²) is divided into a main living area and a smaller room paved with a mosaic floor (perhaps a winepress) at its southern end. A central stone column supported the roof beams. A rectangular tower (5.8 × 4 m) with walls 1–1.5 m thick was found next to the dwelling. According to Dar, the tower was used for processing or storing the agricultural produce (wine) which, in addition to sheepherding, was the main means of livelihood of these farmers. As we shall see below, farmhouses of this type were found in all parts of the country, especially in the peripheral regions.

The Golan Heights, stretching from Mount Hermon south to the Yarmuk River, south of the Sea of Galilee, is a classic transition area between the wider Hauran culture and the settlements in Galilee. Hippos (Susita) in the south and Panaeas (Banias) in the north were the only two cities on the Golan Heights; the rest of the settlements were Jewish or Christian villages of no more than 3–4 ha.²⁷

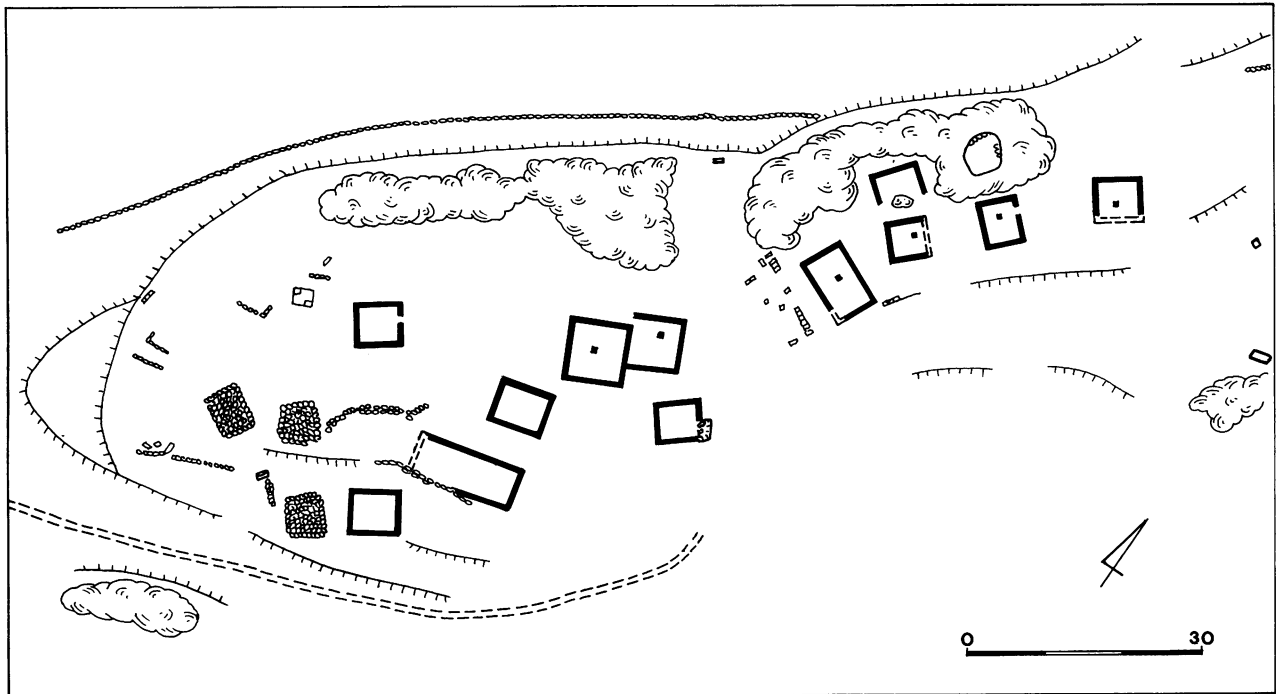
²⁵ Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites*, 114–33. See also I. Tepper and S. Dar, "Bir Ensubbe," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 3 (1984), 43.

²⁶ Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites*, 140–44; S. Dar and I. Tepper, "Mount Hermon," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 4 (1985), 76.

²⁷ Z. U. Ma'oz's claim ("Comments on Jewish and Christian Communities in Byzantine Palestine," *PEQ* 117 [1985], 65–67; idem, "Golan," in *NEAEHL*, II, 538) that there was a clear separation between Jewish and Christian villages in the Golan appears to be more reasonable than that of Dauphin ("Jewish and Christian Communities"), who contends that there were joint communities in villages populated by both Jews and



2 Sites in Byzantine Palestine. For detailed maps, see below, Fig. 38 (Naḥal Yattir) and Fig. 45 (Sede Boqer).



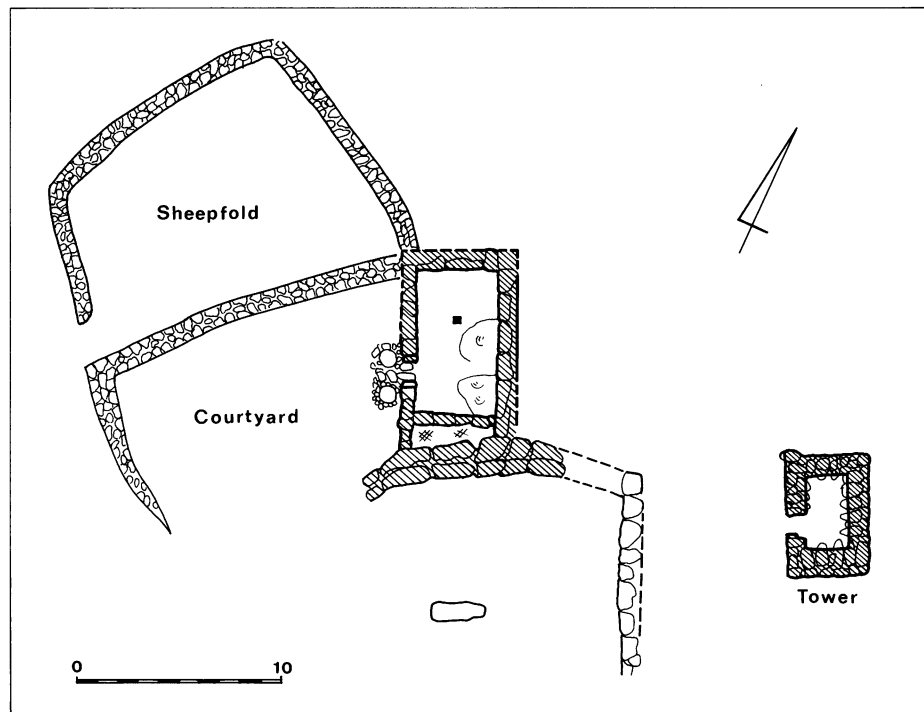
3 Plan of the remains at Bir an-Sobah (after Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites*, 117)



4 Dwelling unit at Bir an-Sobah, looking southwest



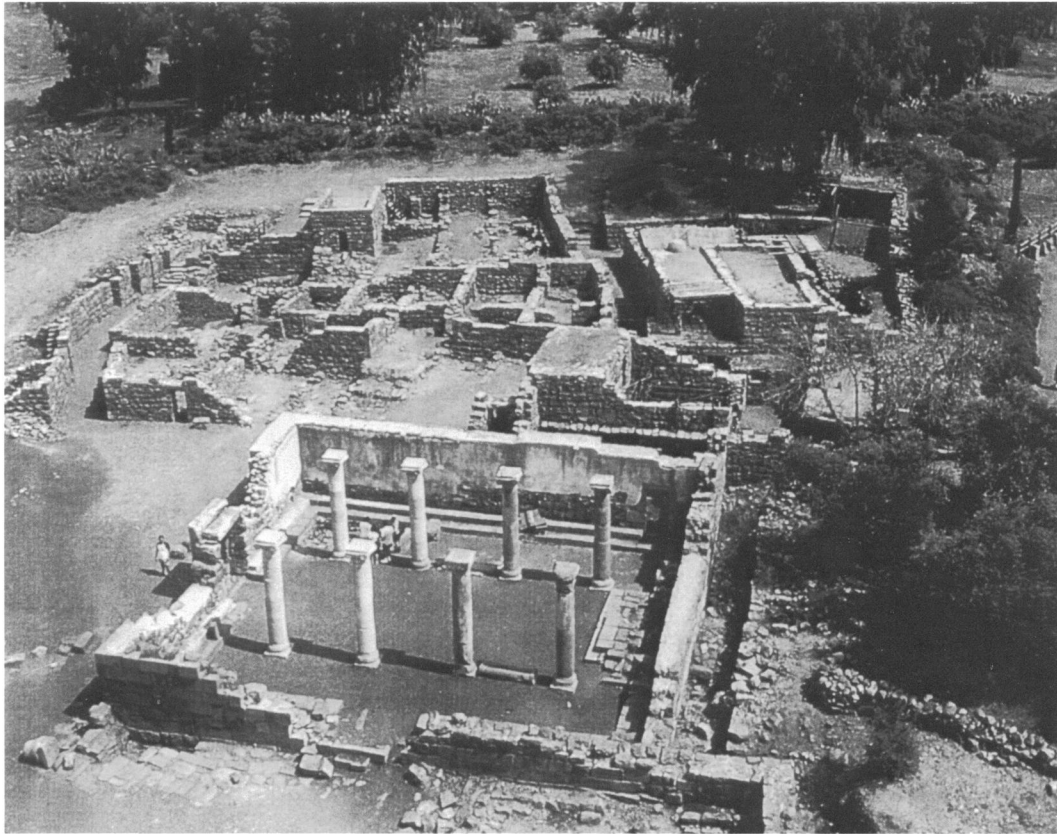
5 Ritual stone in the center of Bir an-Sobah, looking west



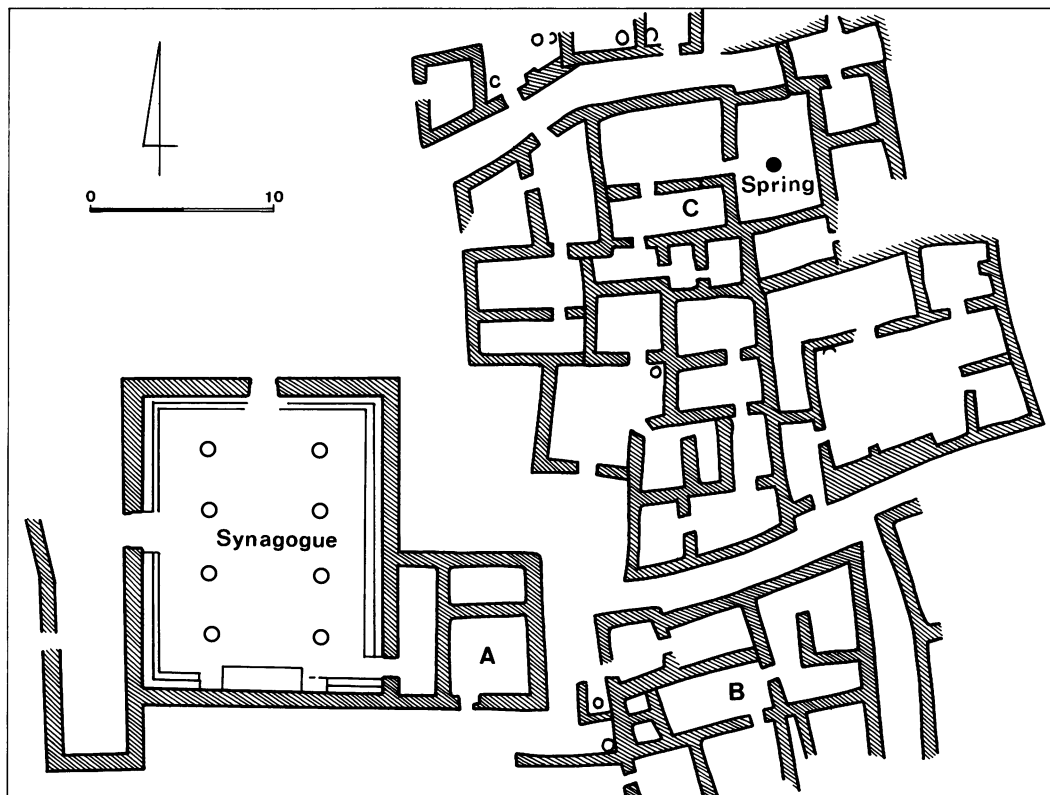
6 Plan of the farmhouse on the south bank of Nahal Govta (after Dar, *Settlements and Cult Sites*, 141)



7 Remains of the farmhouse on the south bank of Nahal Govta, looking north



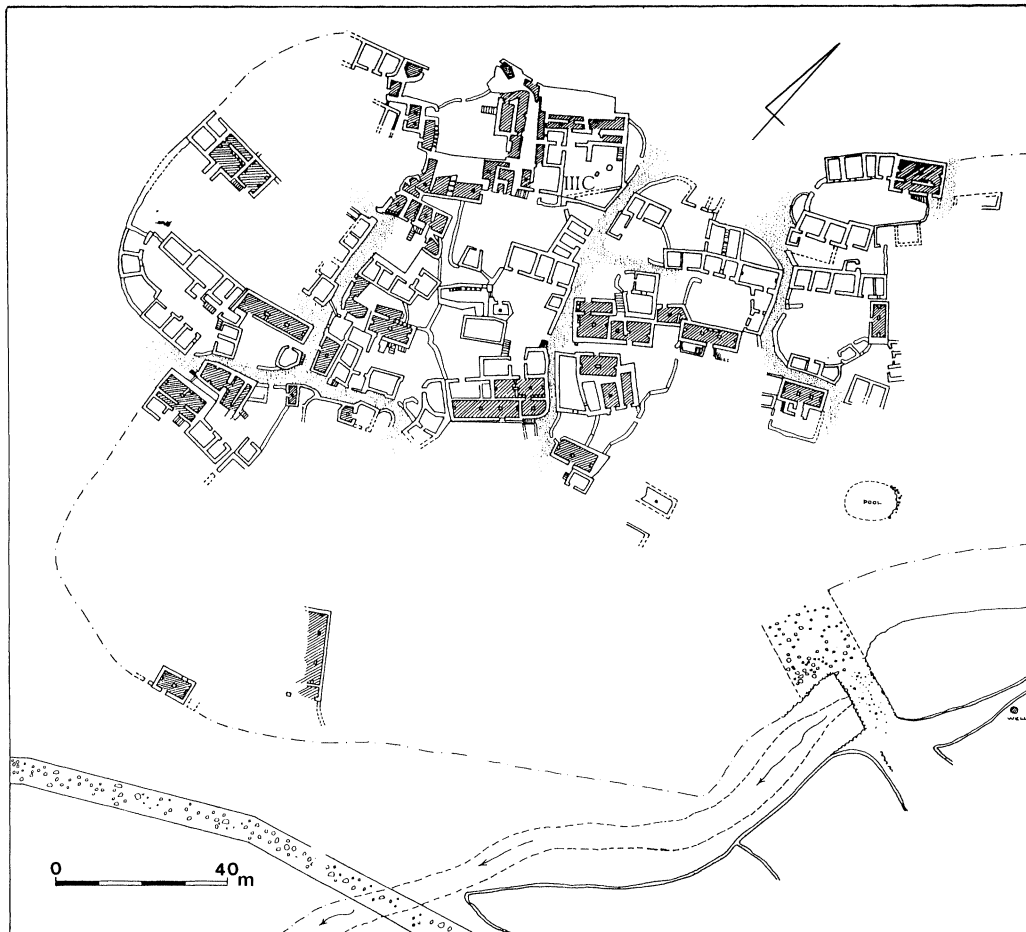
8 Ancient Qaşrin (photo: from the archives of Z. U. Ma'oz)



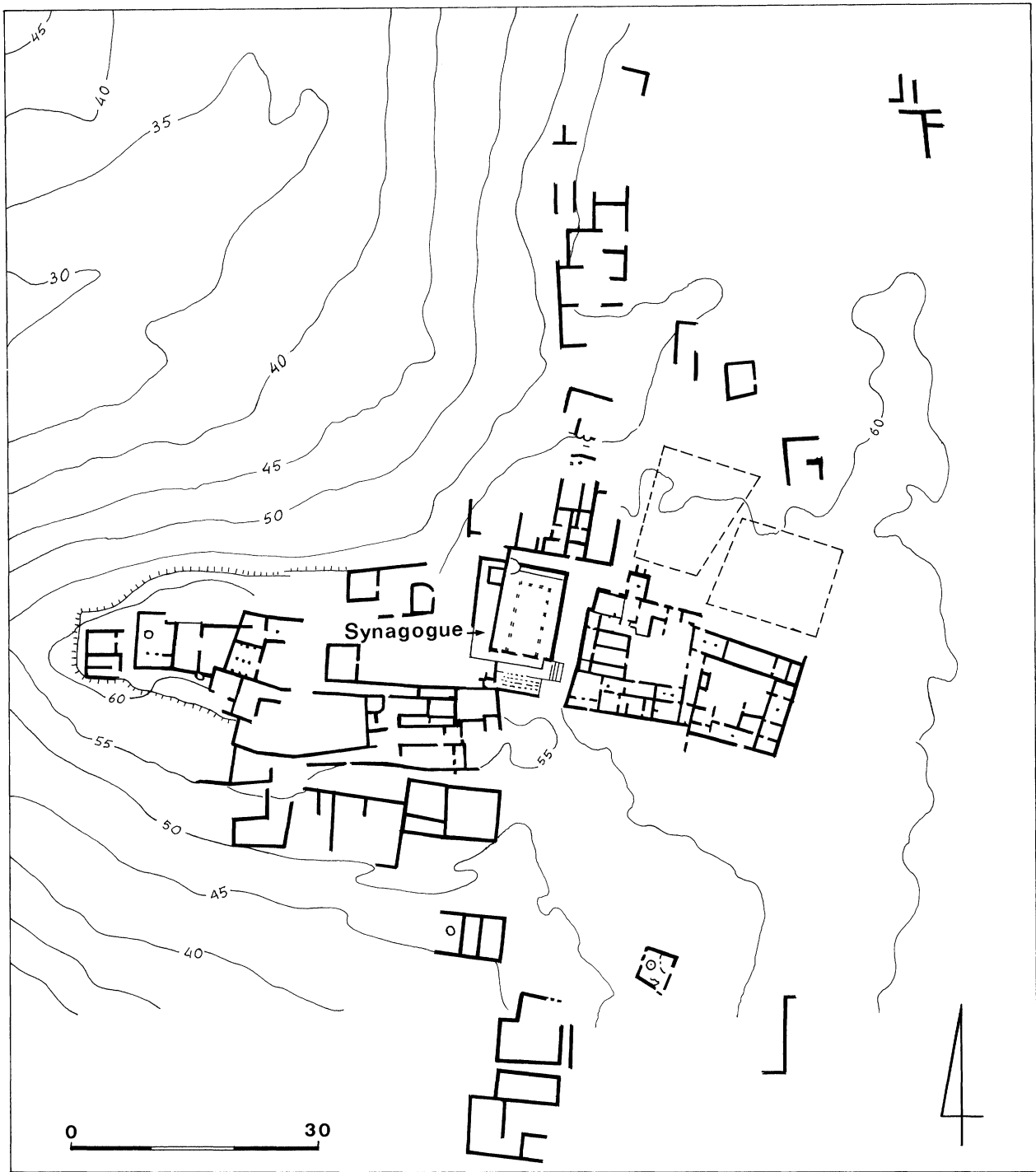
9 Plan of the remains of the synagogue and houses excavated at Qaşrin (after Ma'oz, "Qaşrin: The Synagogue," *NEAEHL*, IV, 1219, and Killebrew, "Qaşrin: The Village," 1223)



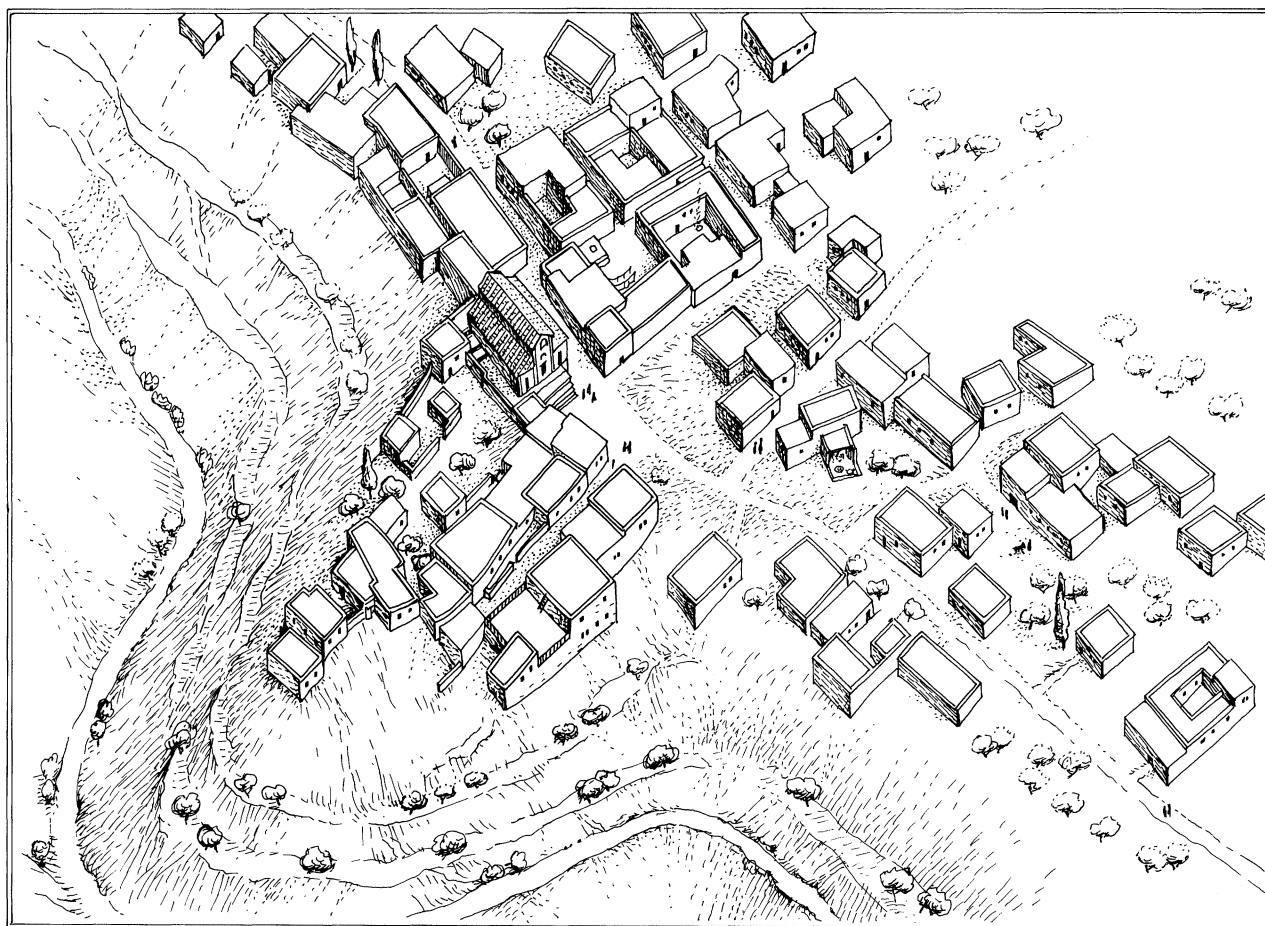
10 Proposed reconstruction of the village at Horvat Kanaf (drawing by Leen Ritmeyer, from the archives of Z. U. Ma'oz)



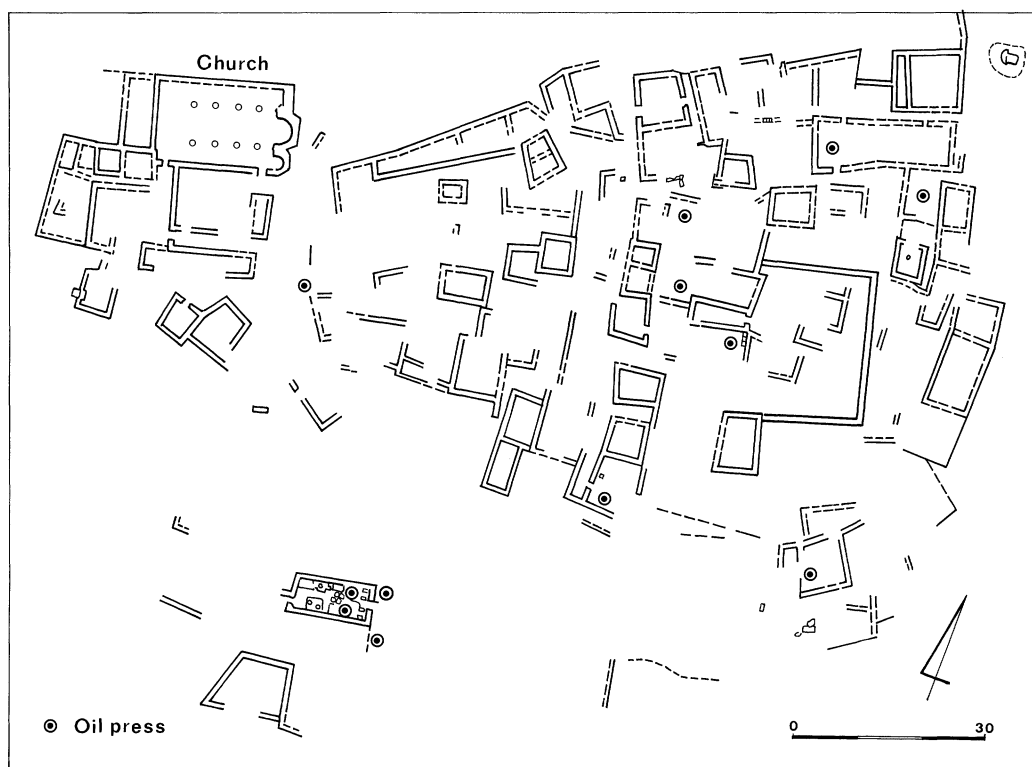
11 Plan of the remains at Kafr Naffakh (after Dauphin and Gibson, "Ancient Settlements in Their Landscapes," 12, fig. 2)



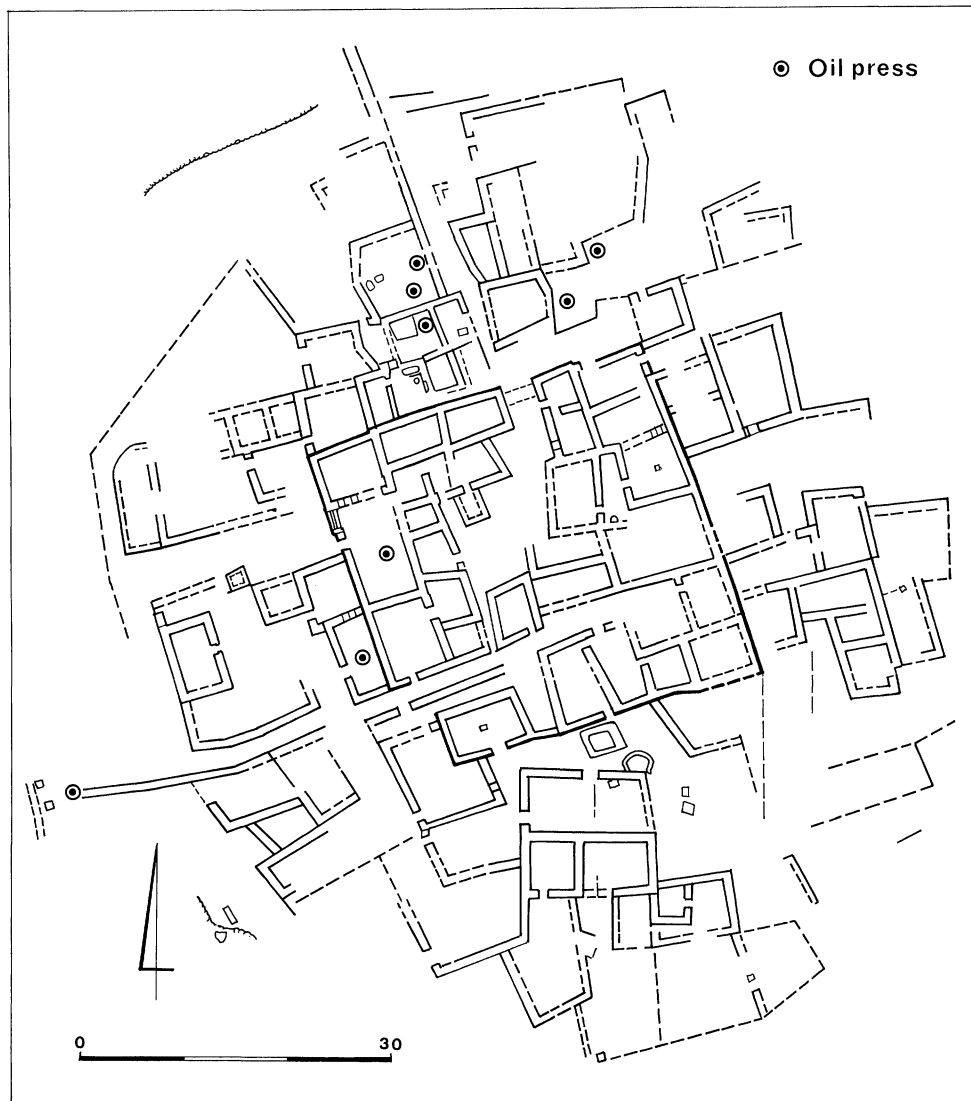
12 Plan of the remains at Chorazin (after Yeivin, "Chorazin," 302)



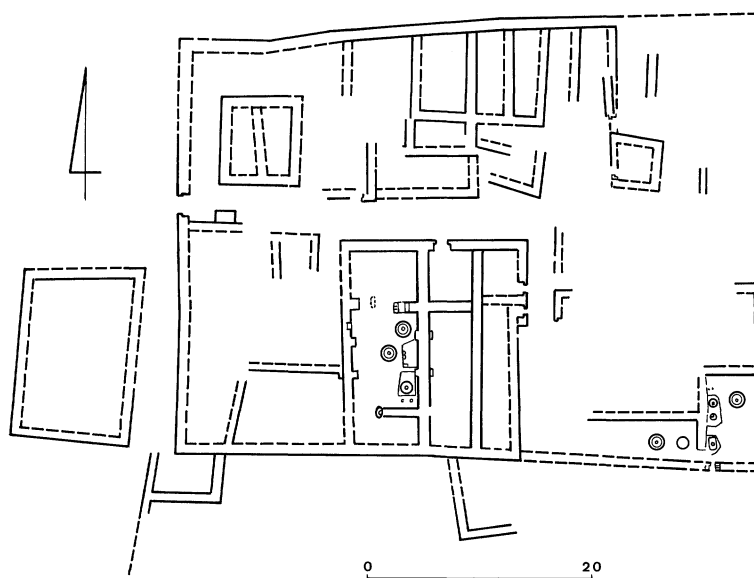
13 Proposed reconstruction of Chorazin in the Byzantine period (drawing by Leen Ritmeyer)



14 Plan of the remains at Horvat Karkara in western Galilee (after Frankel, "Some Oil Presses," 47)



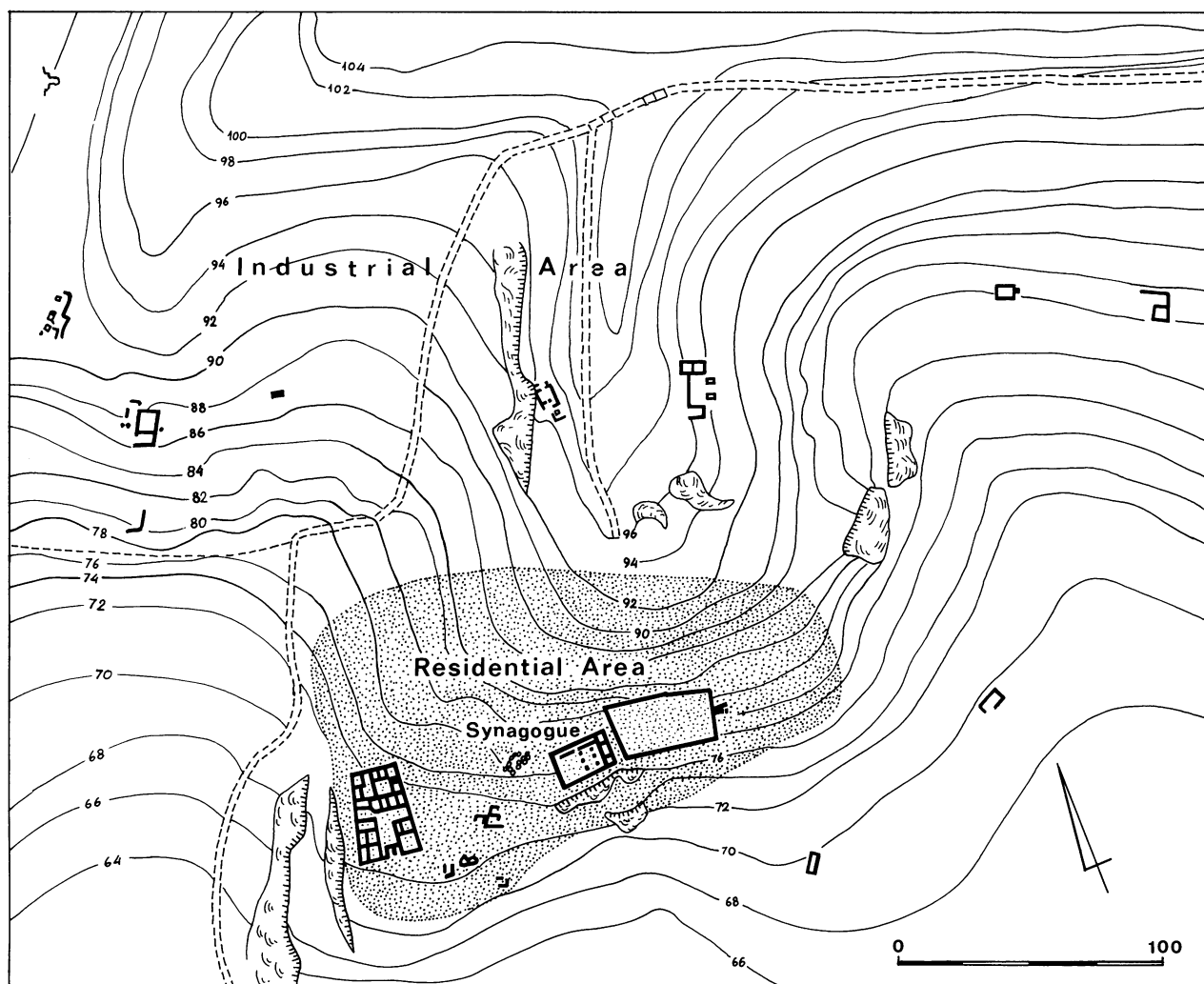
15 Plan of the remains at Ḥorvat Din'ila (after Frankel, "Ḥorvat Din'ila," 21)



16 Plan of the eastern farmhouse complex at Khirbet el-Quseir
(after Frankel, "Some Oil Presses," 52)



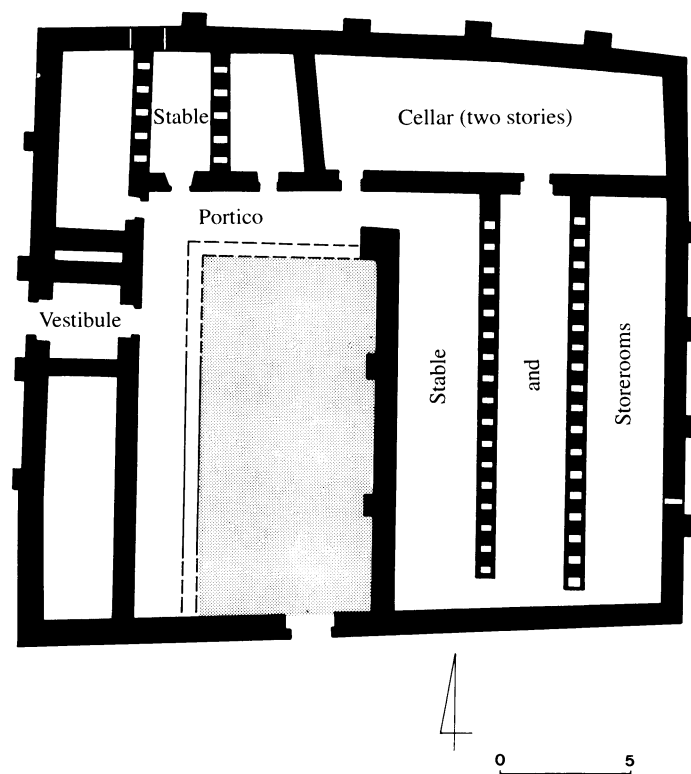
17 Remains of the Byzantine village at Horvat Sumaqa, looking south



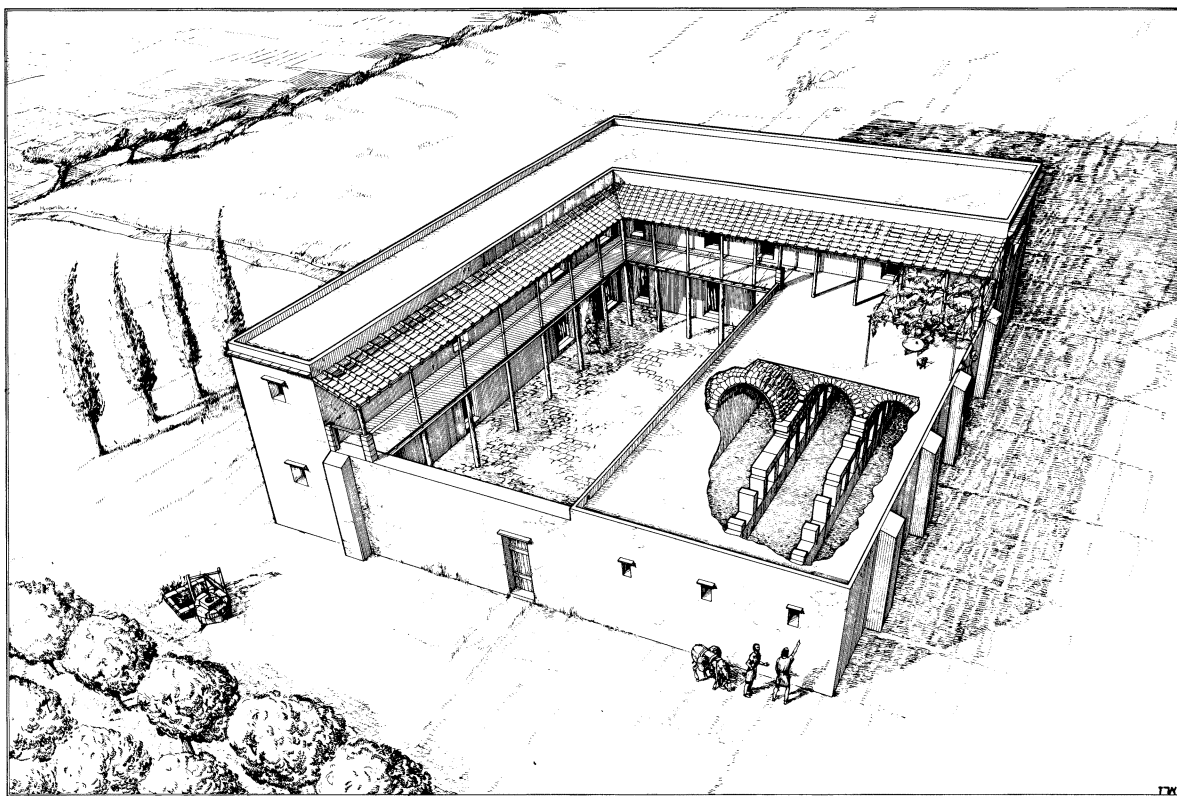
18 Plan of the remains at Horvat Sumaqa on the Carmel (after Dar, "Sumaqa," 1412)



19 The Byzantine farmhouse at Ramat Hanadiv, looking southwest



20 Plan of the farmhouse at Ramat Hanadiv
(drawing by Tania Gornstein)



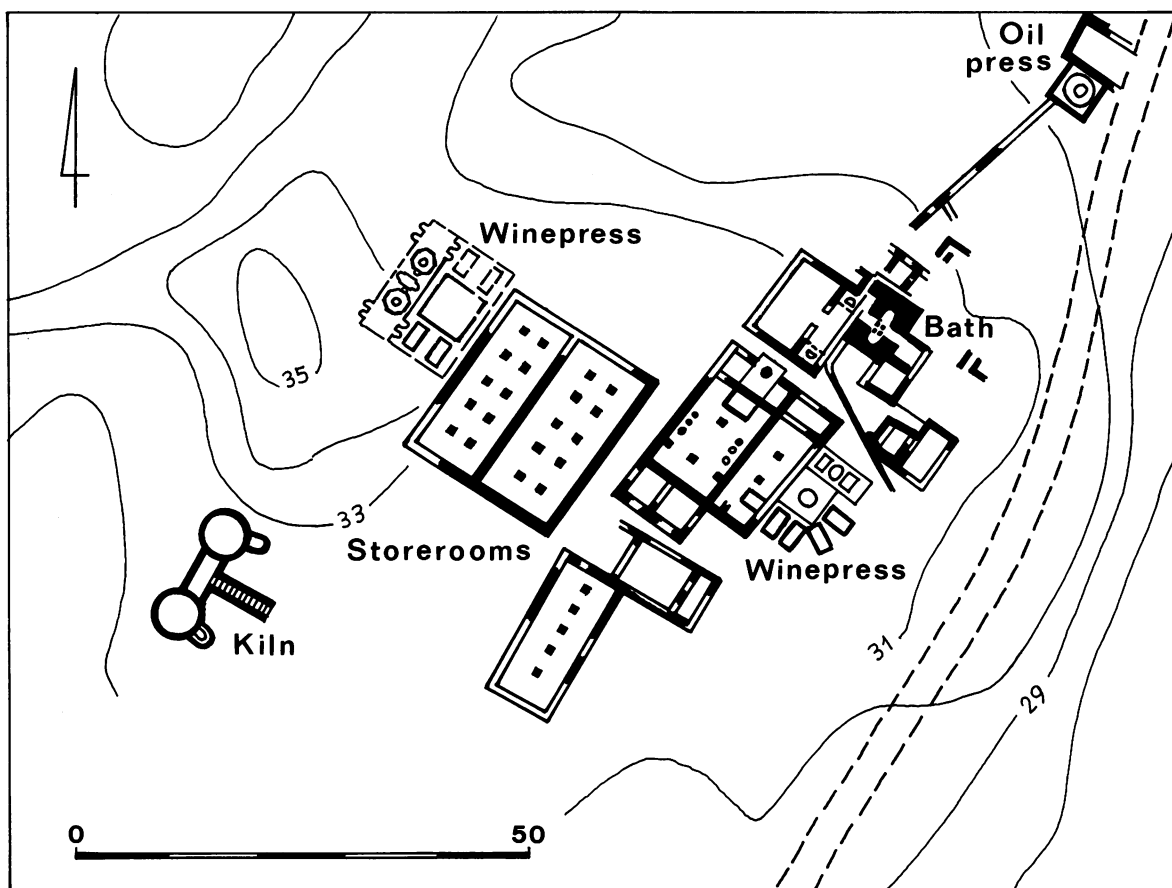
21 Proposed reconstruction of the farmhouse at Ramat Hanadiv (drawing by Erez Cohen)



22 Excavation areas at Byzantine Shiqmona, looking north (photo: Zeev Radovan)



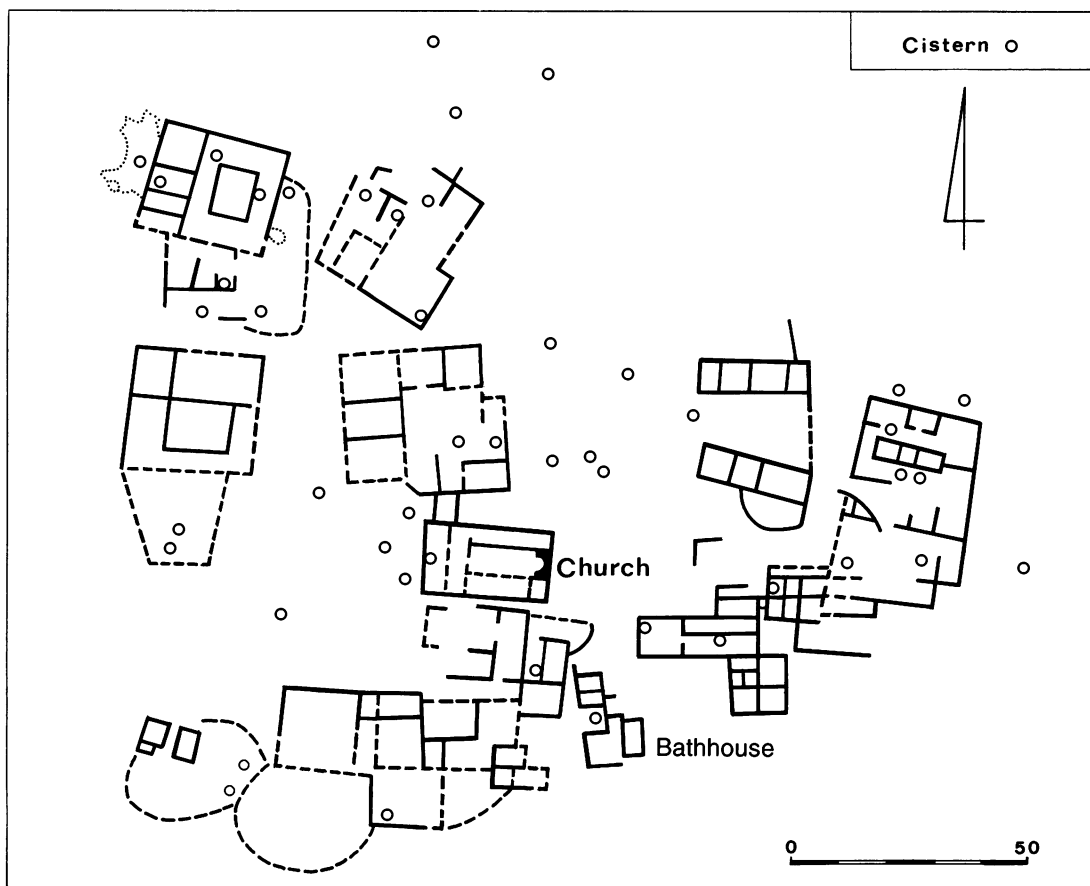
23 General view of the estate near Ashkelon, looking north (photo: from the archives of Y. Israel)



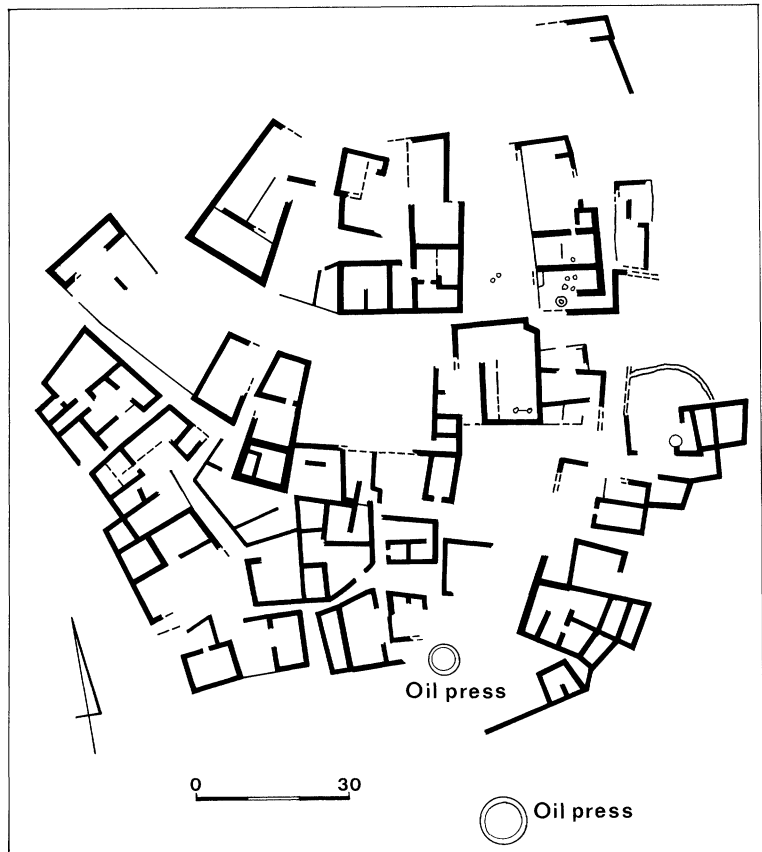
24 Plan of the remains of the estate near Ashkelon (after Israel, "Ashqelon," 100)



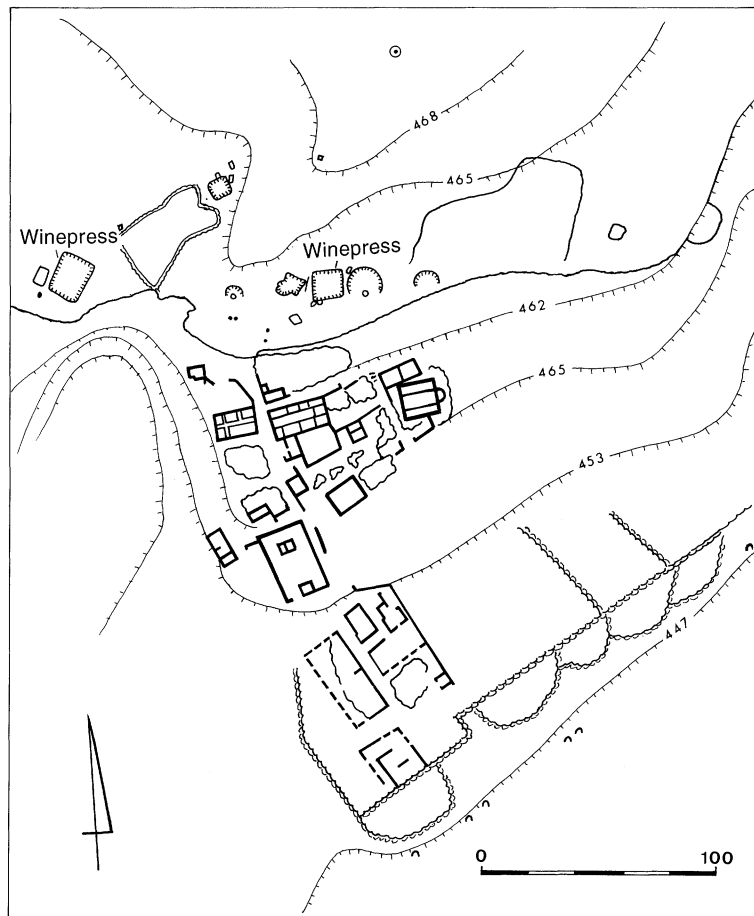
25 Remains of the bathhouse and fishponds that were part of the estate near Caesarea, looking west
(photo: from the archives of Yehudah Peleg)



26 Plan of the remains at Ḥorvat Zikhrin (after Fisher, "Ḥorvat Zikhrin—1987–1989," 42)



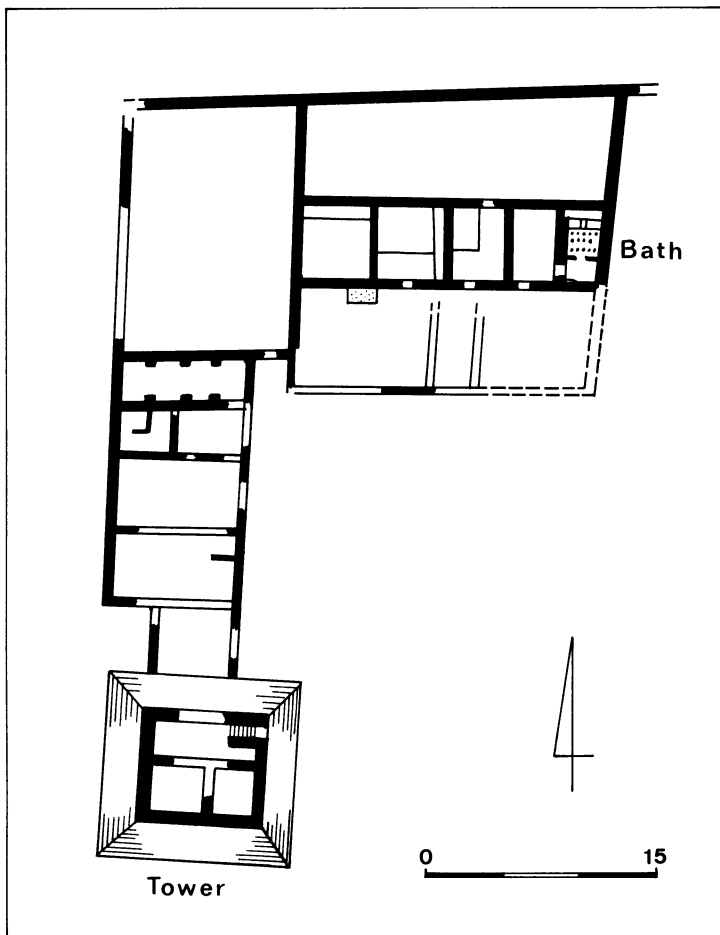
27 Plan of the remains at Khirbet Najar
(after Dar, *Landscape and Pattern*, fig. 35)



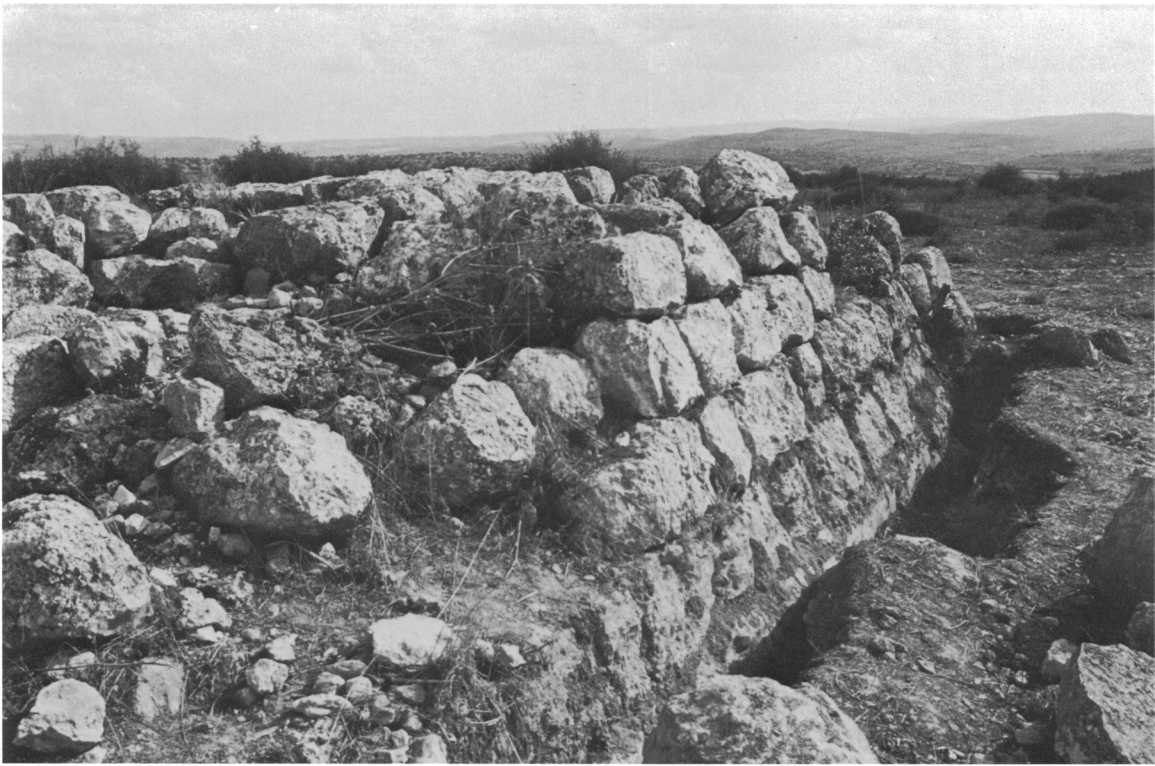
28 Plan of the remains at Khirbet el-Buraq
(after Dar, *Landscape and Pattern*, fig. 37)



29 The remains at Horvat Hazzan (photo: Zeev Radovan)



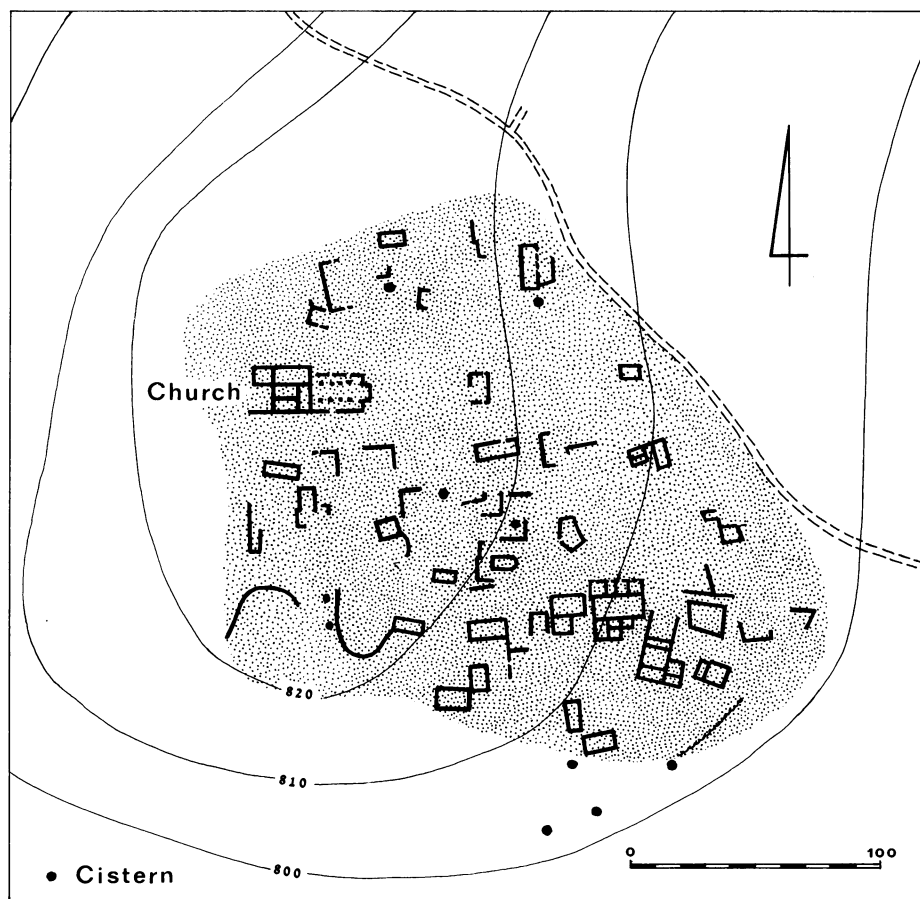
30 Plan of the remains at Horvat Hazzan (after Avni et al., "Ahuzat Hazzan," 118)



31 Remains of the talus (sloped stone rampart) encompassing the tower at Ḥorvat Ḥazzan, looking south



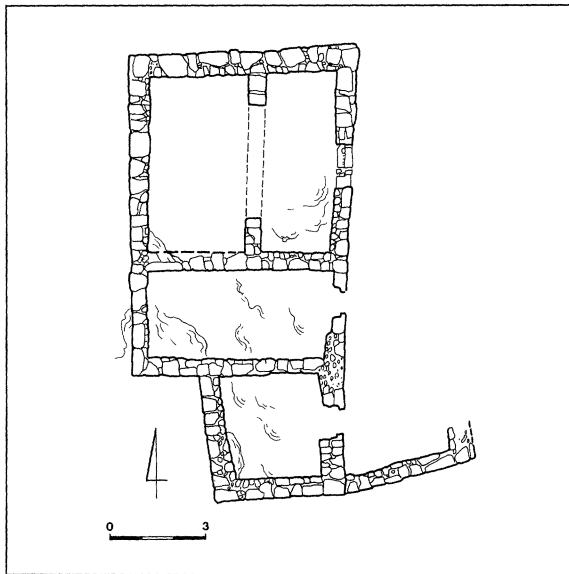
32 Teqoa, looking southeast (photo: Richard Cleave)



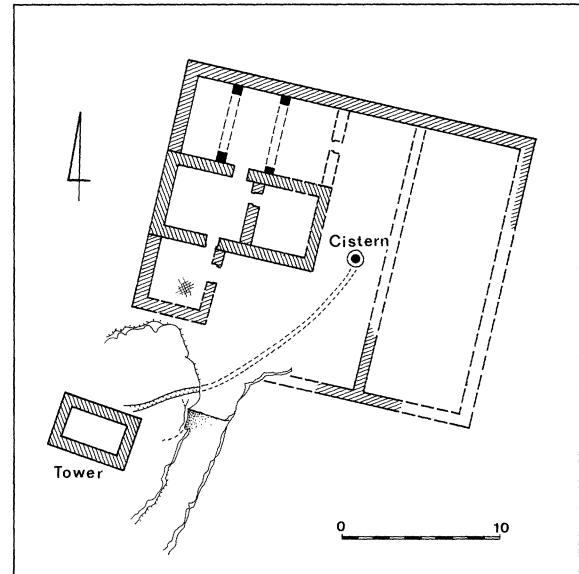
33 Plan of the remains of Byzantine Teqoa (drawing by Erez Cohen)



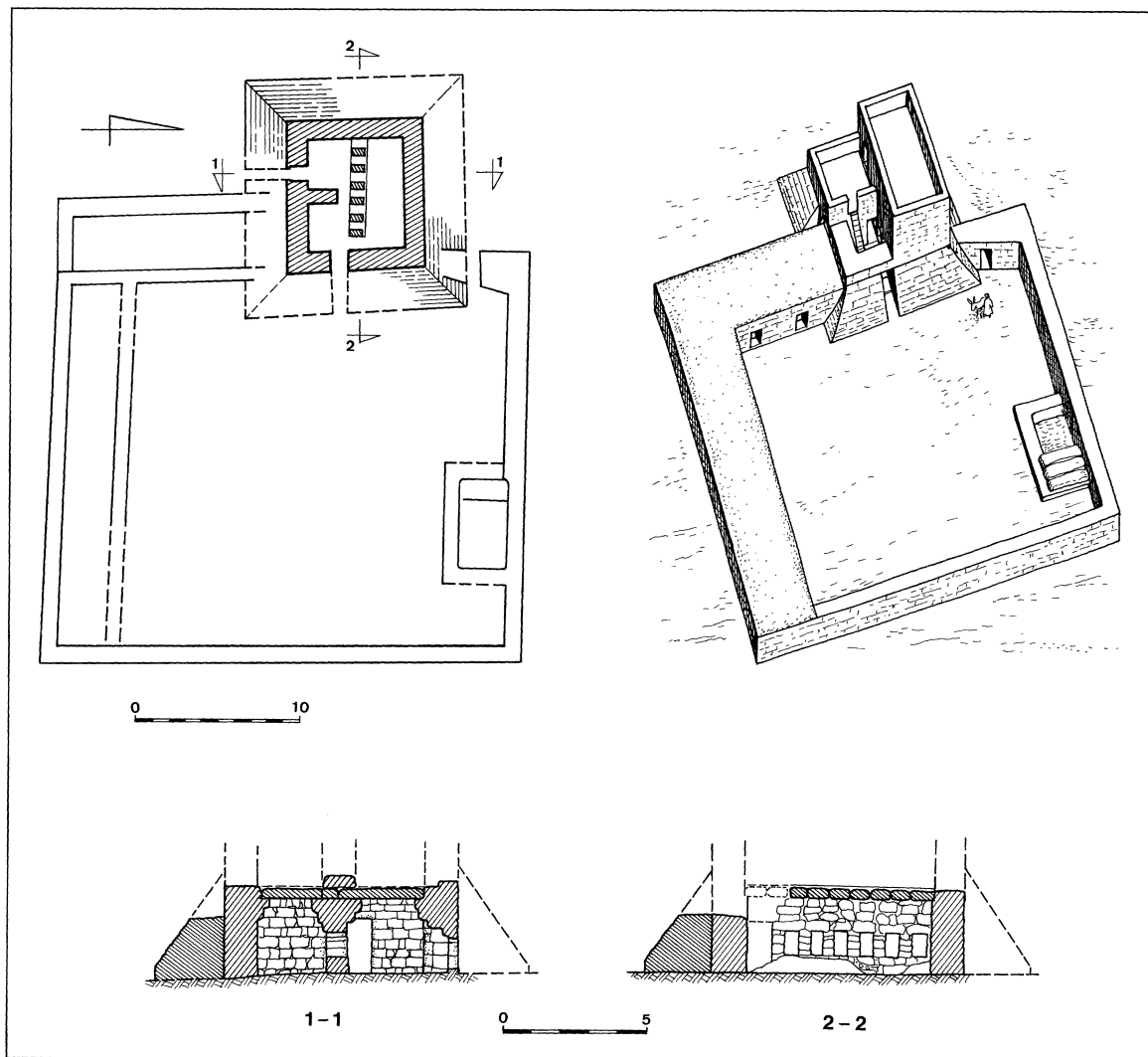
34 Khirbet Susiya, looking south (photo: Zeev Radovan)



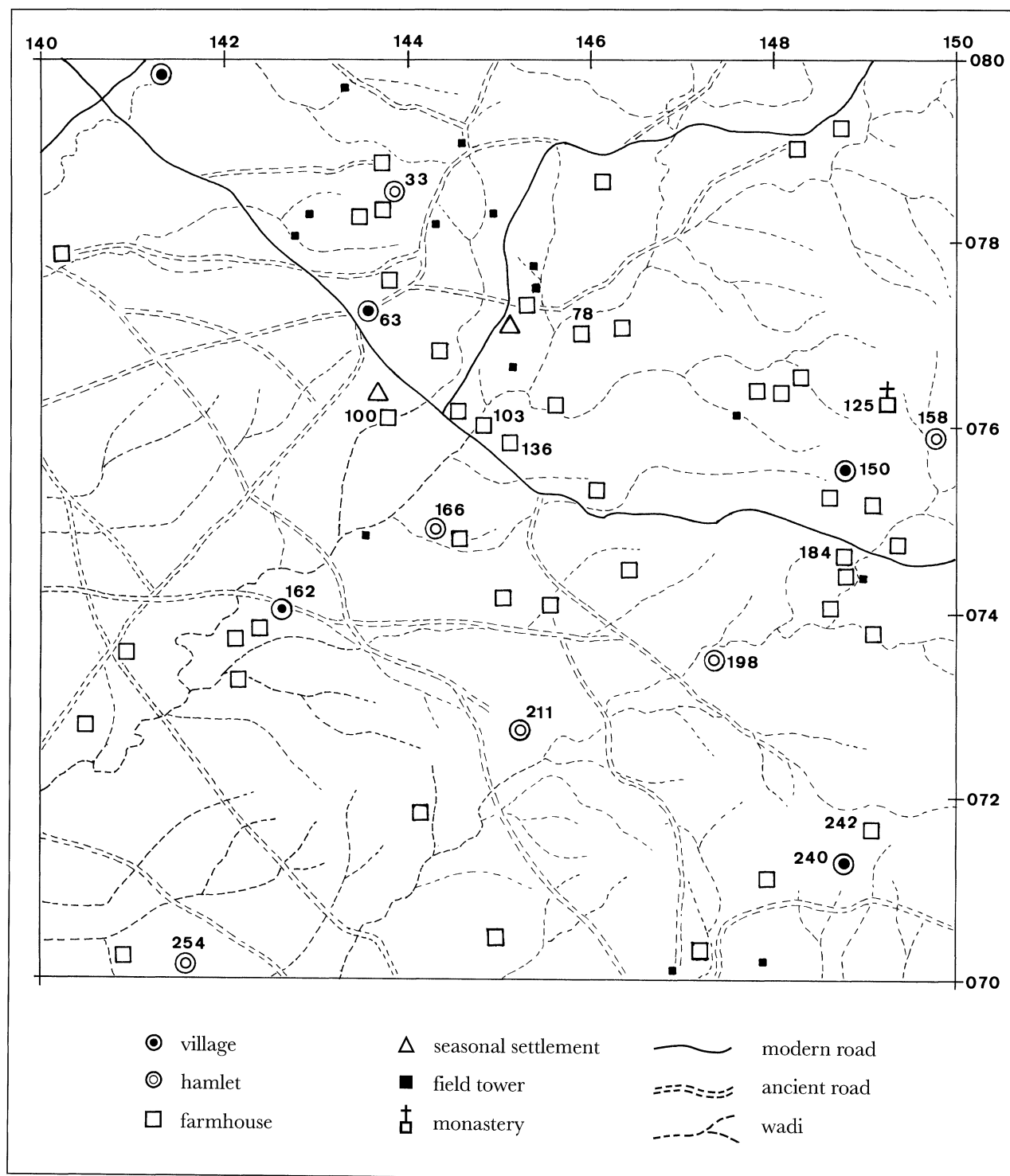
35 Plan of a simple farmhouse at Khirbet et-Tinat (after Sion, "Adam," 87)



36 Plan of a complex farmhouse at Khirbet er-Rabi'a (drawing by Erez Cohen)



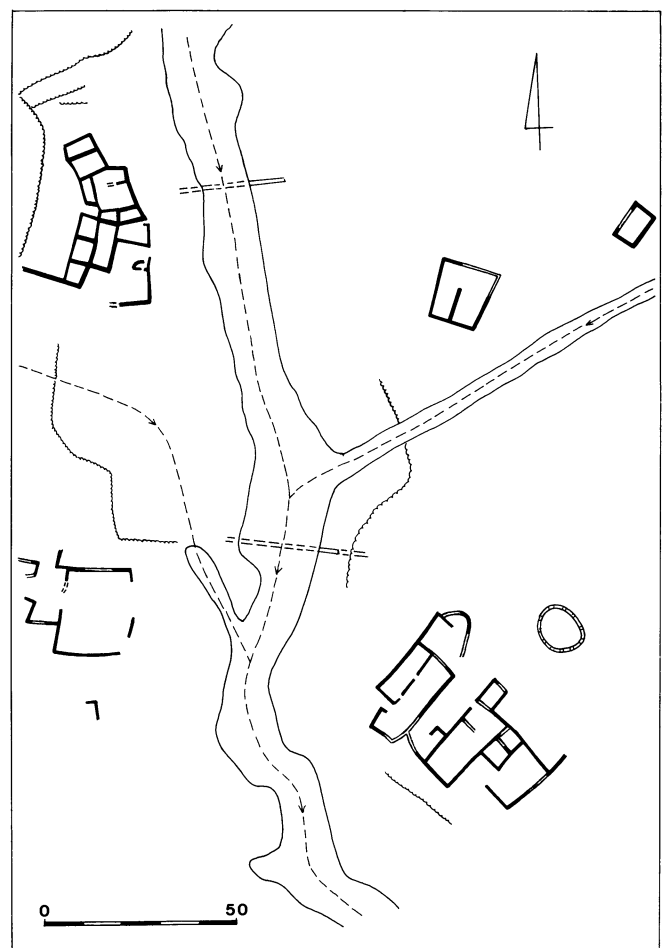
37 Plan, sections, and proposed reconstruction of a farmhouse with a tower at Rujum el-Qasr



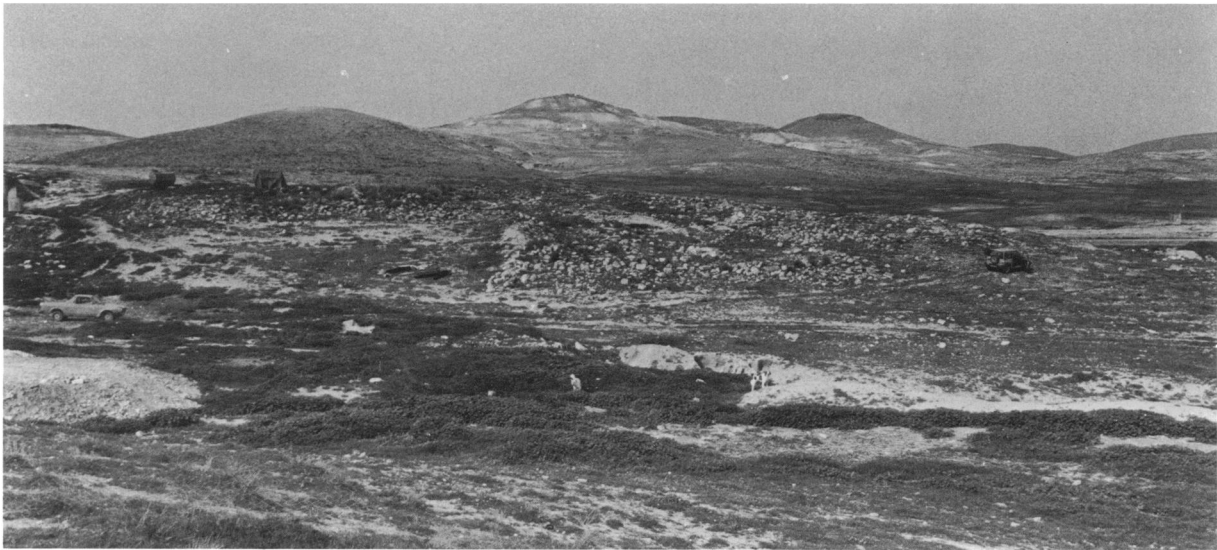
38 Byzantine sites at Naḥal Yattir (after Govrin, *Map of Naḥal Yattir*, 177)



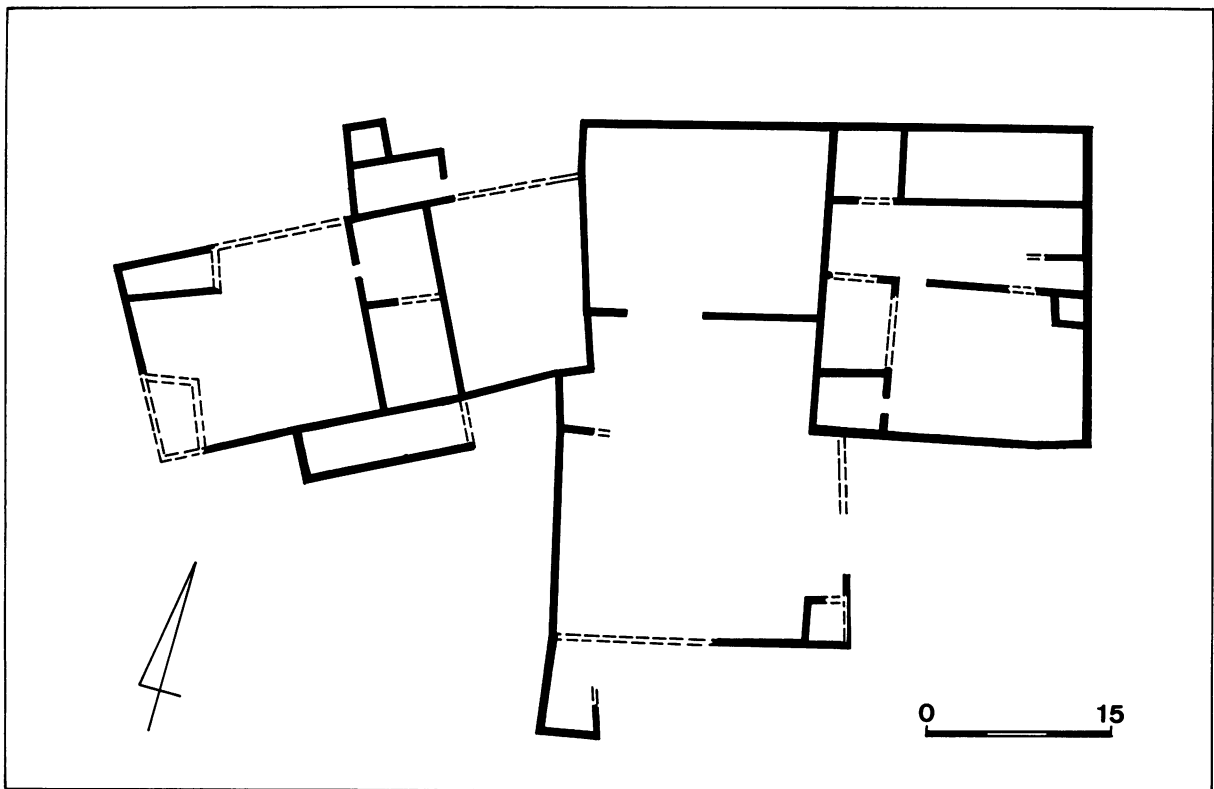
39 Remains at site 158 at Naḥal Yattir, looking northwest (see Fig. 38)



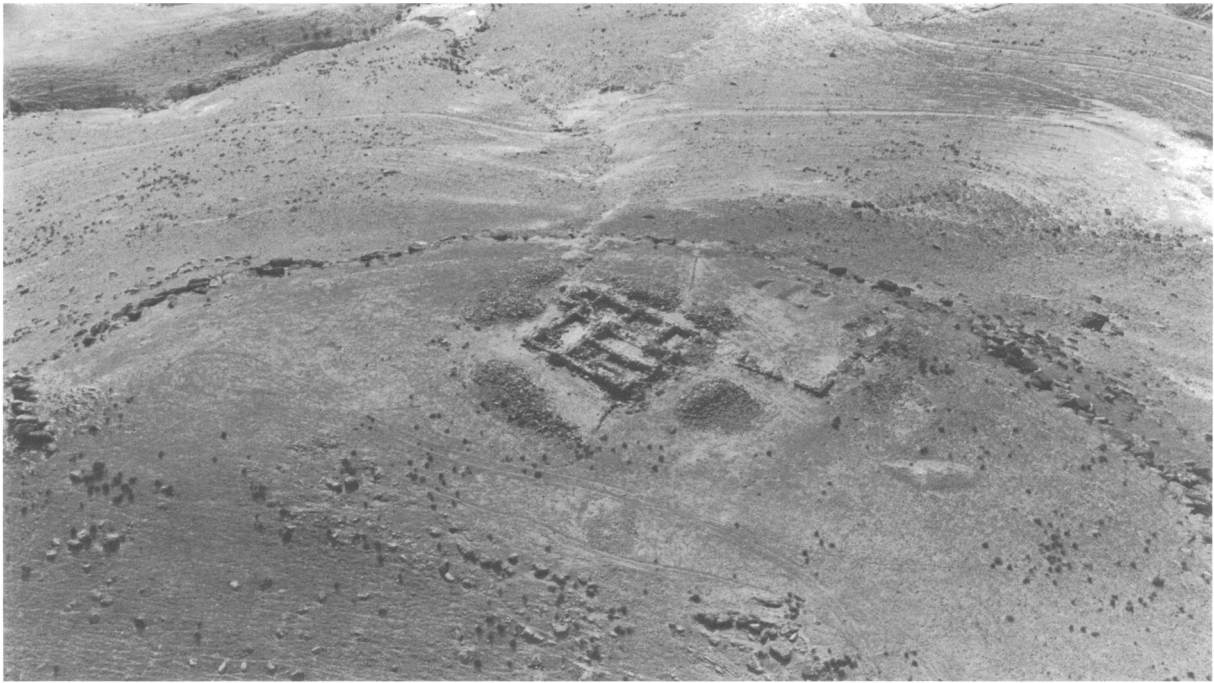
40 Plan of the remains at site 158 at Naḥal Yattir
(see Fig. 38) (after Govrin, *Map of Naḥal Yattir*,
103)



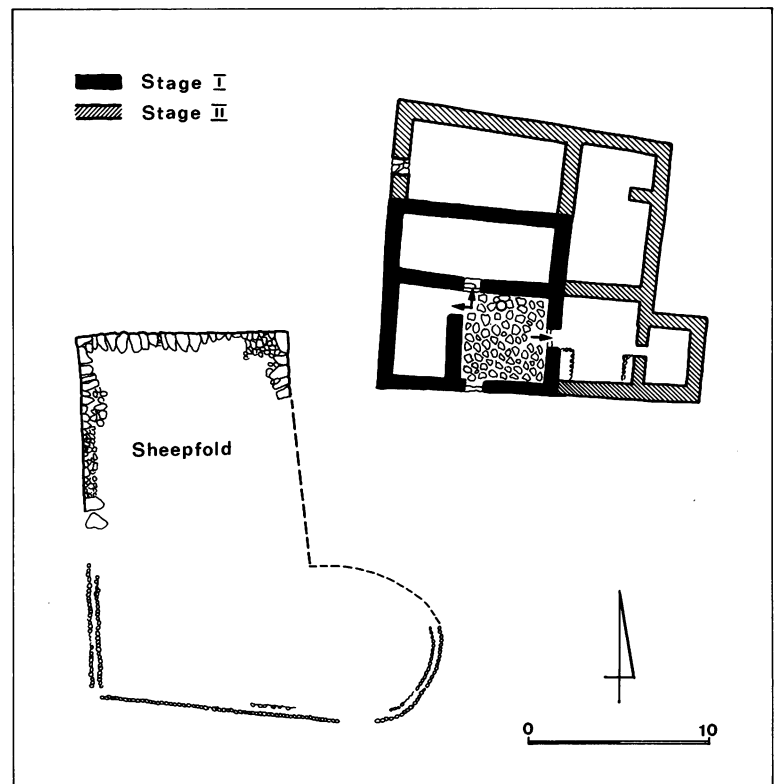
41 Remains of the farmhouse at site 184 at Naḥal Yattir, looking north (see Fig. 38)



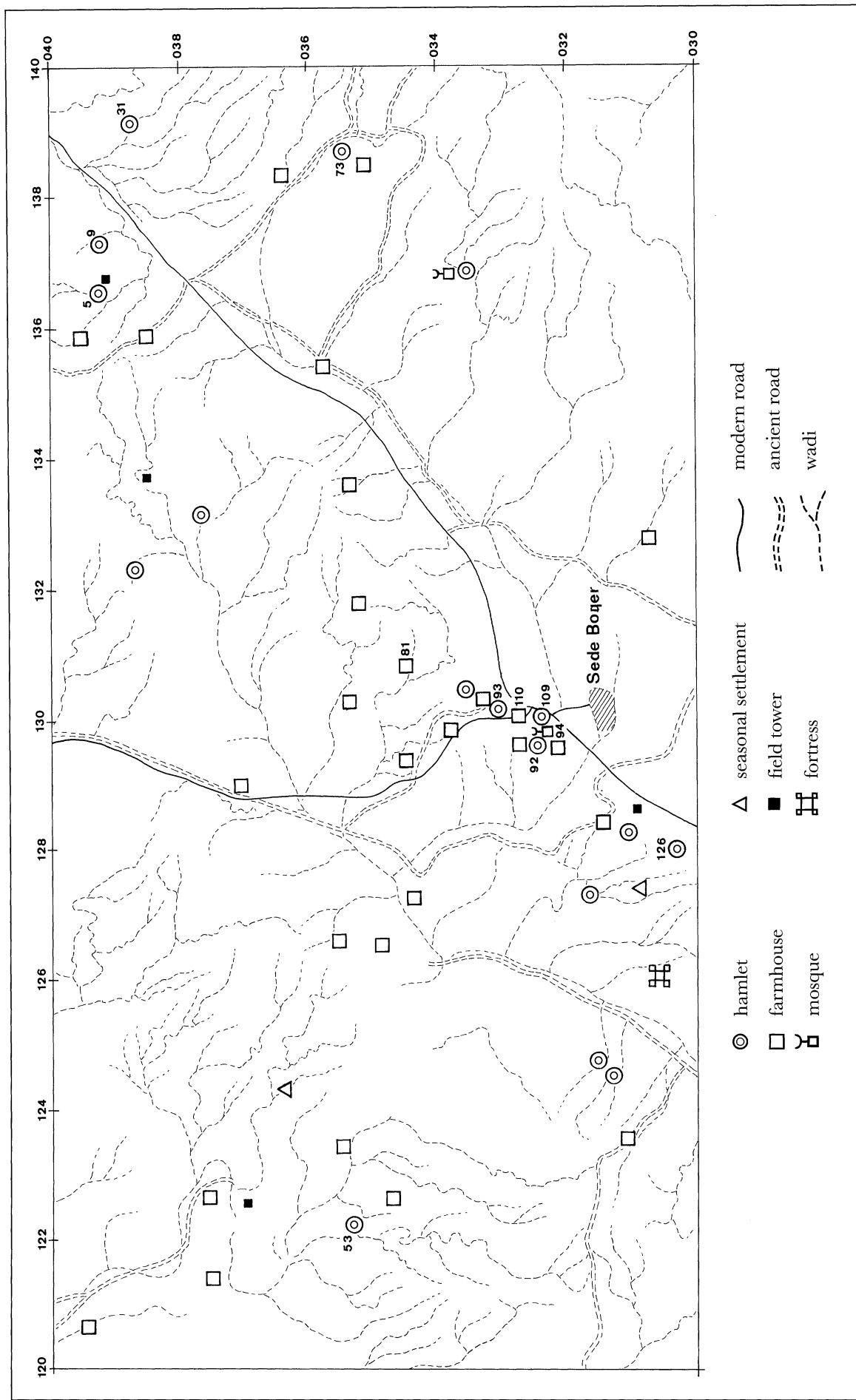
42 Plan of the farmhouse at site 184 at Naḥal Yattir (see Fig. 38) (after Govrin, *Map of Naḥal Yattir*, 119)



43 Har Bariah, looking south (photo: Zeev Radovan)

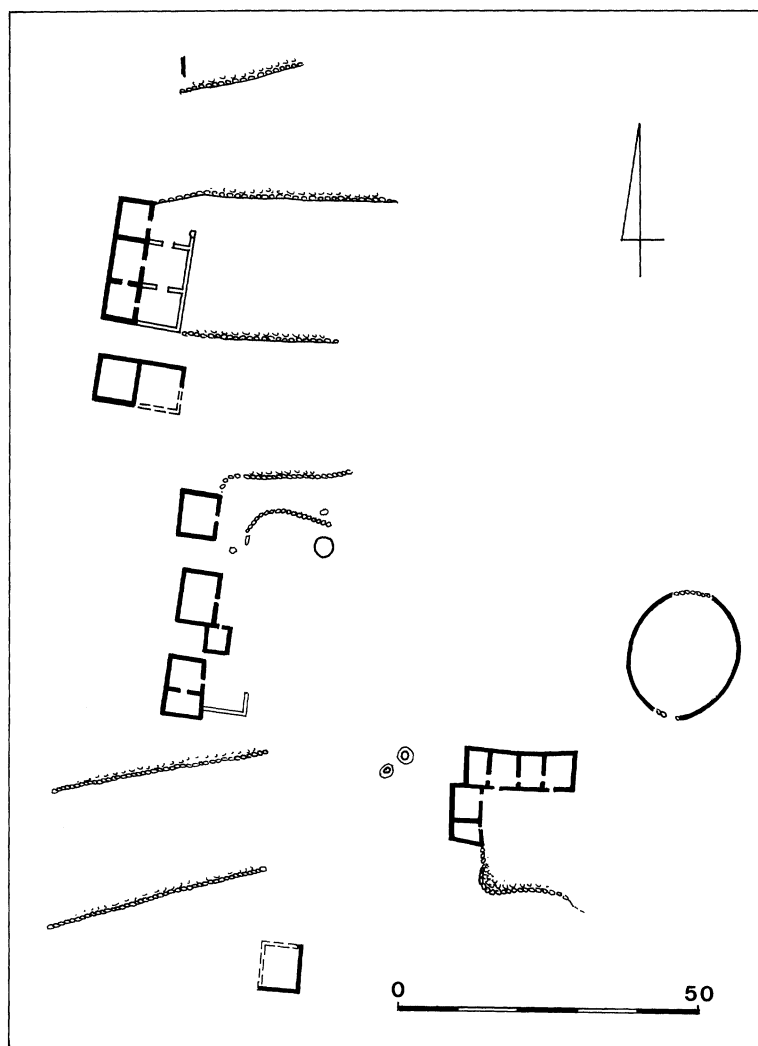


44 Plan of the farmhouse on Har Bariah (drawing from the archives of Y. Beit-Aryeh)

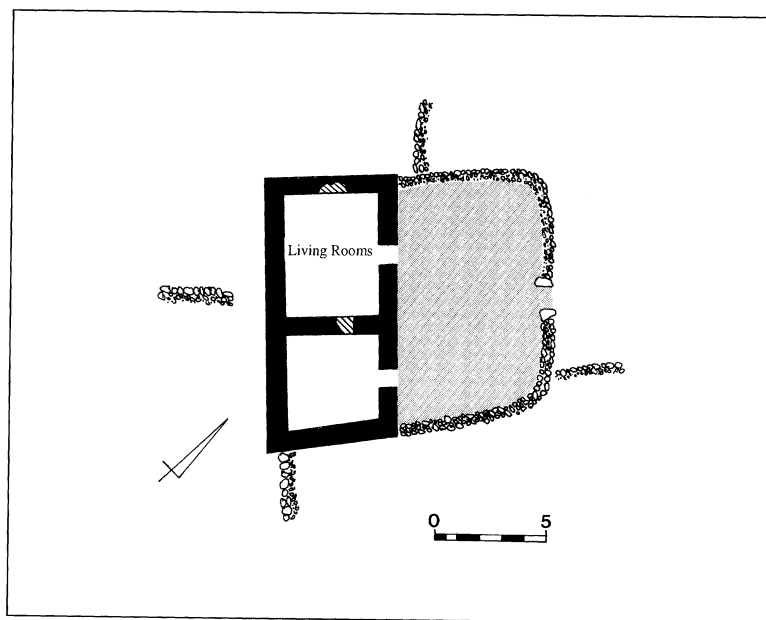


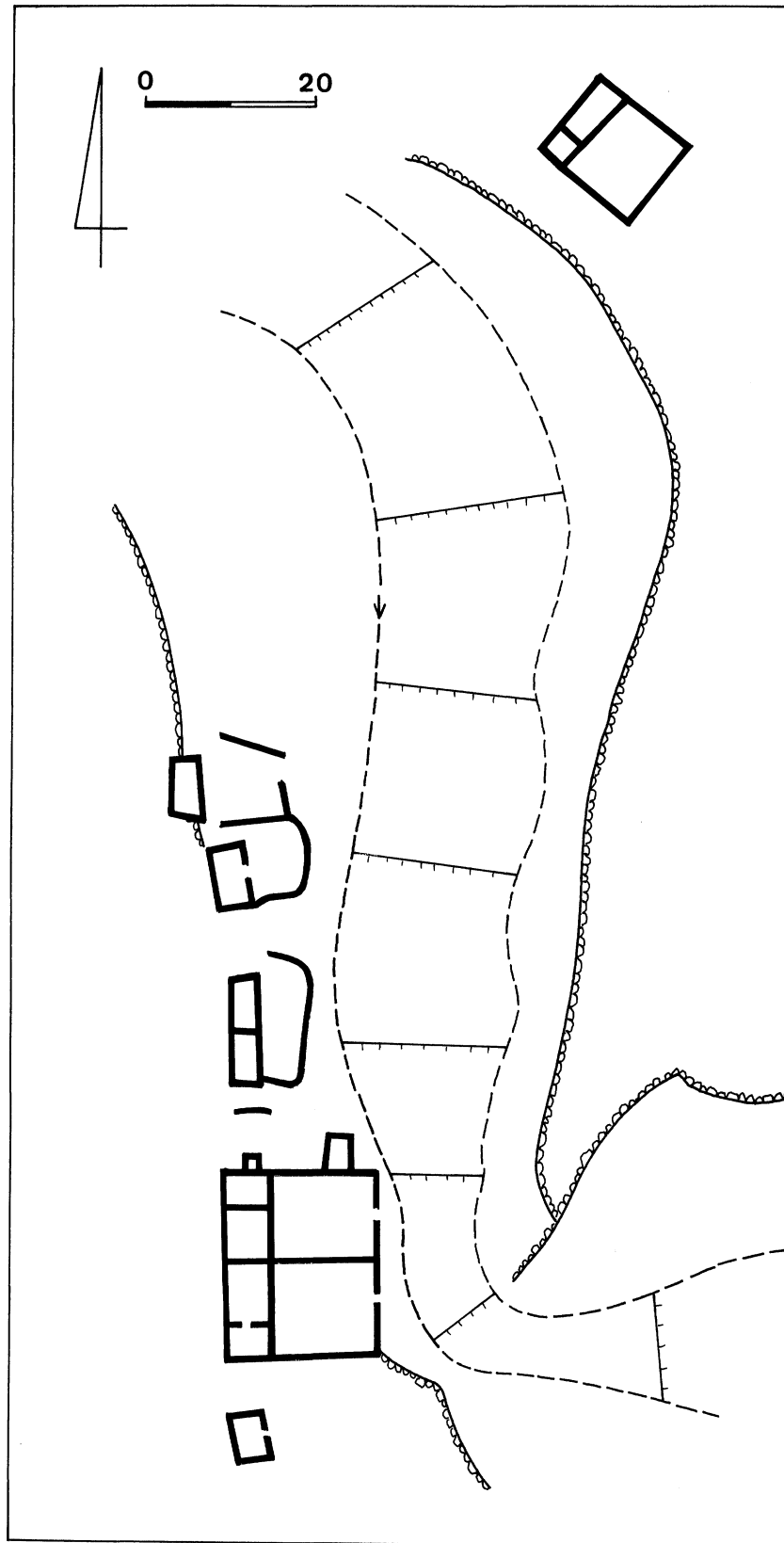
45 Byzantine sites at Sede Boqer (east and west) (after Cohen, *Map of Sede Boqer—East*, 86, and *Map of Sede Boqer—West*, 89)

46 Plan of a typical hamlet at Sede Boqer East, site 109 (see Fig. 45)
(after Cohen, *Map of Sede Boqer—East*, 68)

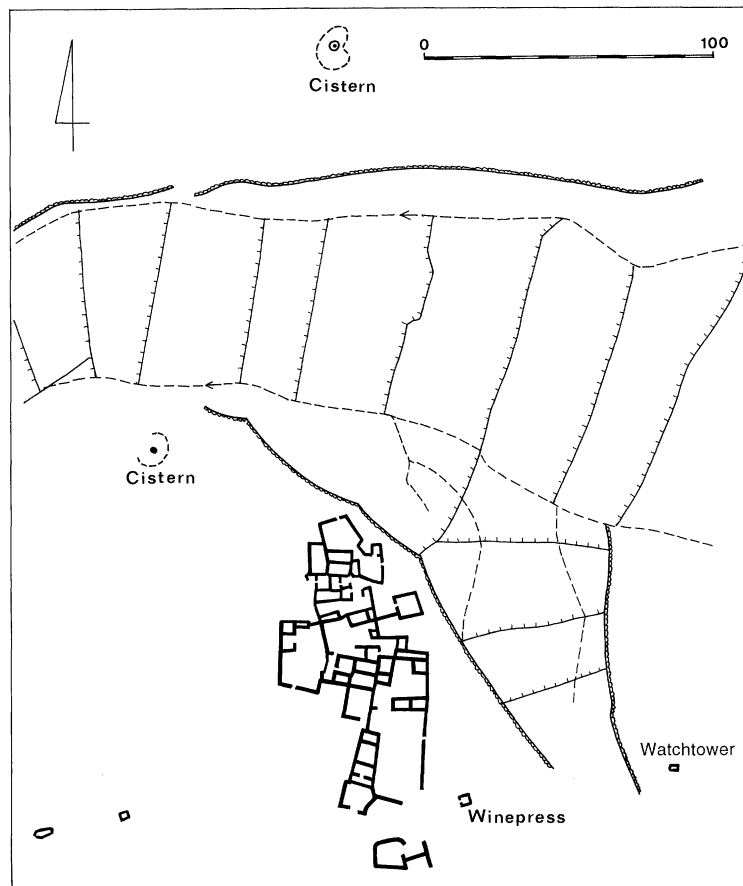


47 Plan of a typical farmhouse at Sede Boqer East, site 81 (see Fig. 45)
(after Cohen, *Map of Sede Boqer—East*, 41)

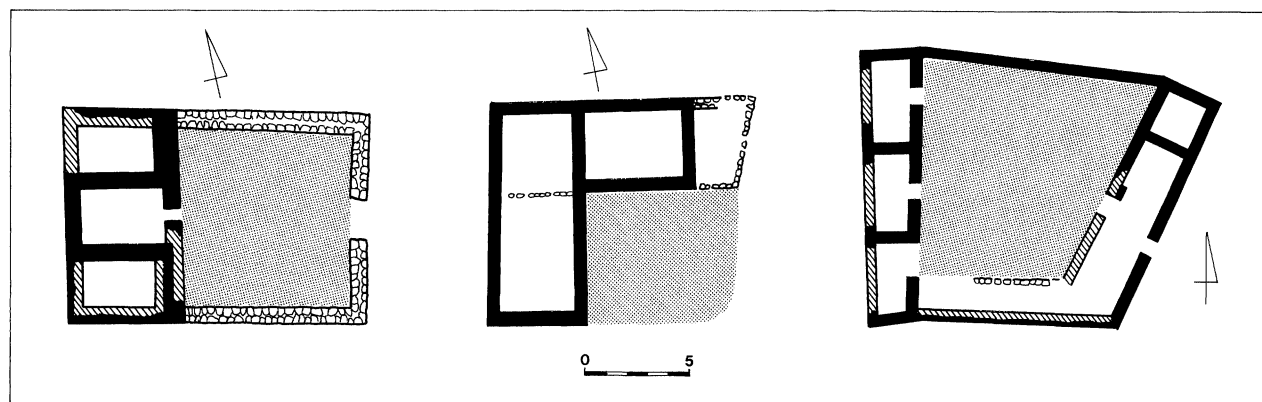




48 Plan of a typical hamlet at Mount Ḥamran West, site 53 (after Haiman, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southwest*, 73)



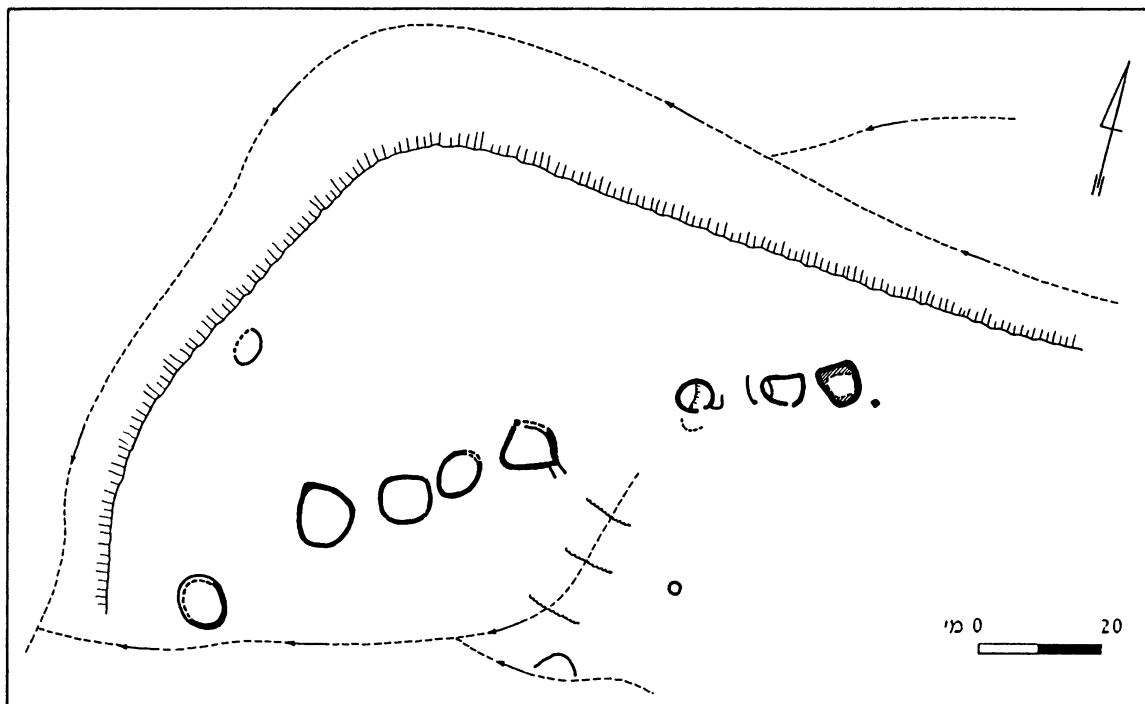
49 Plan of a hamlet at Mount Ḥamran West, site 218 (after Haiman, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southwest*, 149)



50 Comparative plans of farmhouses in the Negev highlands (after Haiman, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southwest*, 146, 174, 184)



51 Seasonal settlement site in the central Negev highlands (site of Beer Karkom) (photo: from the archives of G. Avni)



52 Plan of a seasonal hamlet at Mount Saggi, site 164 (after Avni, *Map of Har Saggi*, 90)



53 Oboda, looking southeast (photo: Zeev Radovan)



54 Building remains on the slope of Byzantine Oboda, looking south



55 Meẓad Yeroḥam, looking southeast (photo: Zeev Radovan)



56 Remains of dwelling structures at Reḥovot; in the center, the church of Reḥovot-in-the-Negev, looking east



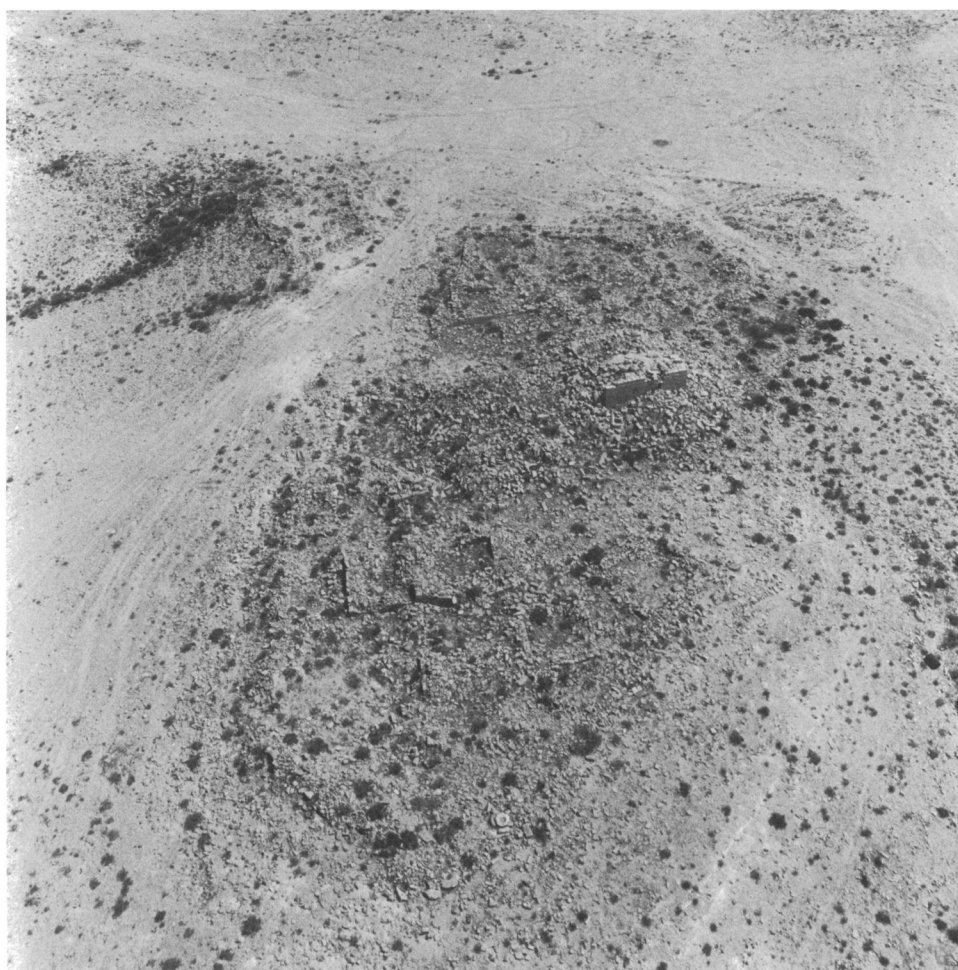
57 Sobota, looking southwest



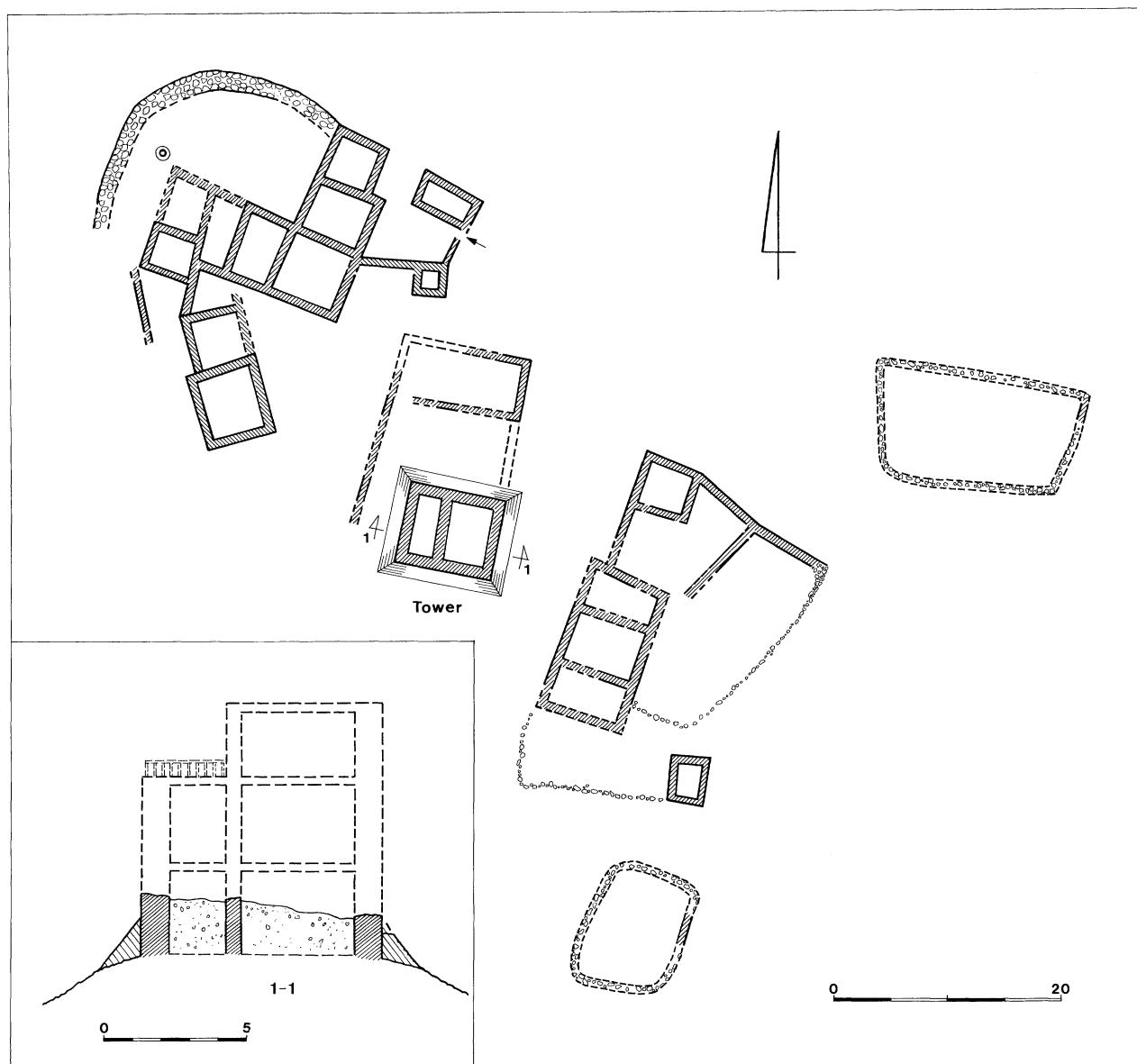
58 The remains at Sa'adon, looking southeast



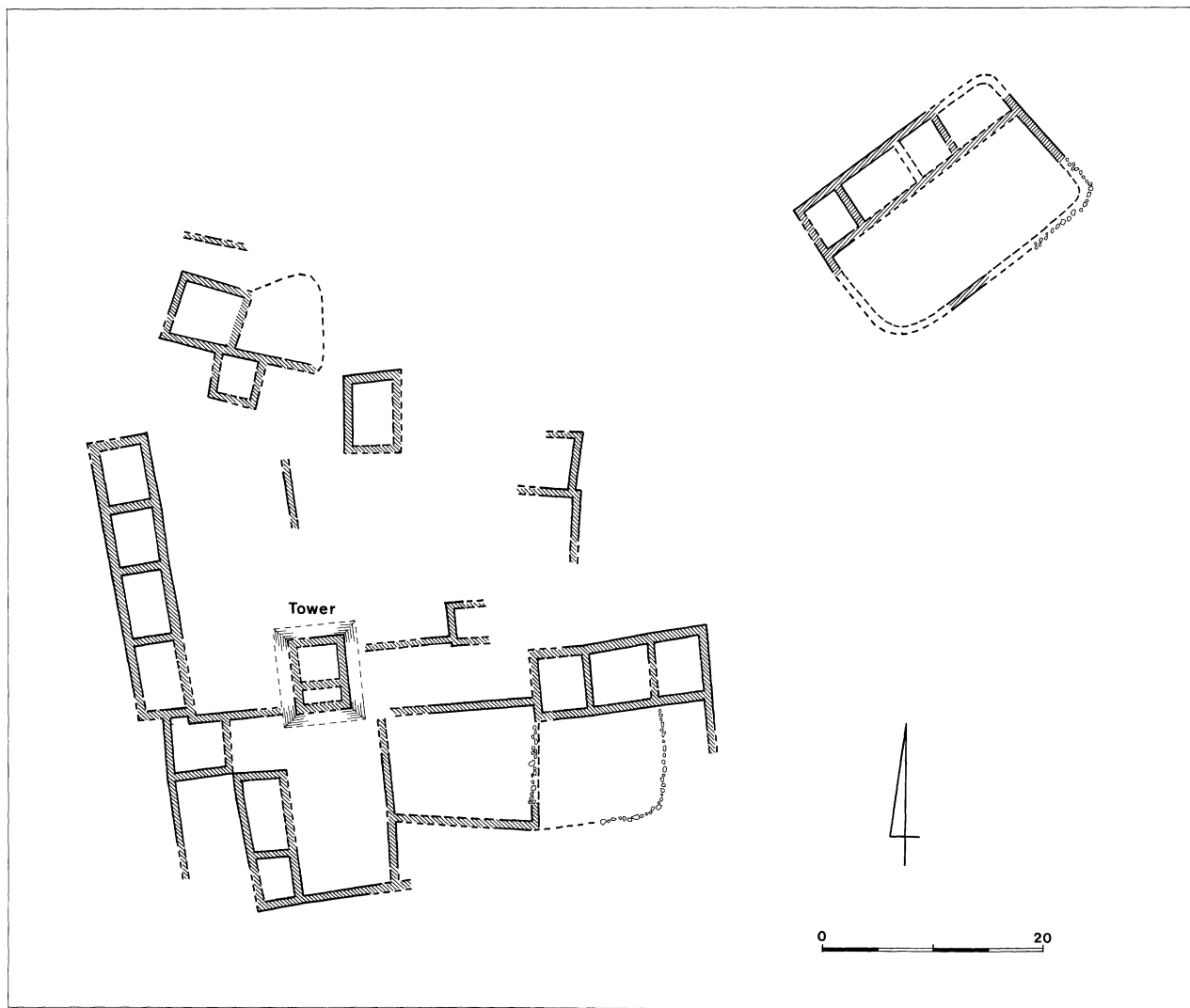
59 Towerlike structure surrounded by a talus at Sa'adon, looking west



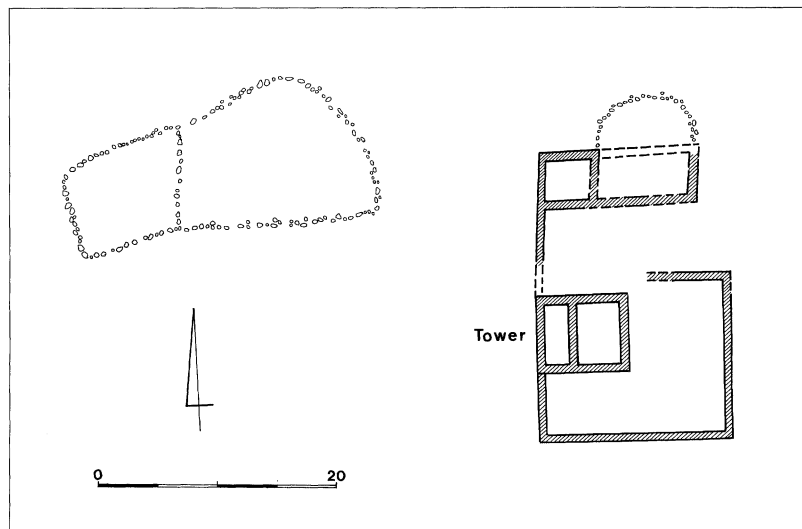
60 Farmhouse with a tower (Naḥal Sa'adon 2), looking northeast



61 Plan of the remains of the fortified farmhouse on the south bank of Naḥal Sa'adon and a cross section of the tower (Naḥal Sa'adon 2) (drawing by Tania Gornstein)



62 Plan of the remains of the farmhouse with tower on the north bank of Naḥal Sa'adon (Naḥal Sa'adon 1) (drawing by Tania Gornstein)



63 Plan of the remains of the farmhouse with tower on the south bank of Naḥal Sa'adon (Naḥal Sa'adon 3) (drawing by Tania Gornstein)



64 Villa and estate depicted in the mosaic floor from Tabarka, Tunisia (drawing by Tania Gornstein, after M. Blanchard-Lemée, M. Ennaïfer, and H. and L. Slim, *Sols de l'Afrique romaine: Mosaïques de Tunisie* [Paris, 1995], fig. 121)

The villages of the Golan may be divided into two principal types: the “introverted village,” wherein the houses are built close together and its alleys converge at the center of the village like the spokes of a wheel; and the “dispersed village,” wherein clusters of farmhouses with later building additions create a network of winding alleys.²⁸

Qaşrin (map coord. 2162.2661), in the center of the Golan Heights, is a good example of an introverted village (Fig. 8). The excavations of Zvi Ma'oz and Ann Killebrew have exposed the village's synagogue and nearby dwellings, which show signs of additions and renovations from the late fourth until the mid-eighth century C.E.²⁹ The overall area of the village is estimated to have been about 2 ha and to have contained about seventy-five dwellings. On the basis of this information, the excavators estimate the village's population to have numbered about three hundred (i.e., four persons per family), who subsisted on mixed farming of olives, wine, and grain, as well as herding. The introverted nature of the village may be seen in the plan of the residential neighborhood exposed in the excavations (Fig. 9); the dwellings are attached to each other in amorphous blocks of construction with no preconceived plan. Between these blocks of houses run alleys that lead to the synagogue in the center of the village. The dwellings are constructed quite uniformly, conforming to the building methods in vogue in the Hauran, that is, the use of long, hard basalt stones to create the dwelling's interior wall windows, lofts inside the house, and corbeled roofing. The average size of the rooms in these houses, about 13 m², is also quite uniform; however, each dwelling may have from two rooms (in Building A next to the synagogue) to five or more (in Buildings B and C).

Another village of the introverted type was exposed at Ḥorvat Kanaf (map coord. 1246.2530), 4–5 km east of the Sea of Galilee. The village of the Byzantine period (4th–6th centuries C.E.) was built on a hill (Fig. 10), overlooking the entire area³⁰ and stretching over about 1.5 ha; its houses are spacious, and its alleys ascend the slopes of the hill toward the synagogue located at its top.

An example of a village of the second type, the dispersed village, is Kafr Naffakh (map coord. 2194.2741), located in the center of the Golan Heights and stretching over an area of 3.4 ha.³¹ The surveyors of Kafr Naffakh date its remains to the Byzantine

Christians. The Jewish rural settlement in the Golan was part of a larger series of settlements that included eastern Upper Galilee. M. Aviam's claim (“Galilee,” in *NEAEHL*, II, 456) regarding Upper Galilee is similar to that of Ma'oz, i.e., that there was a complete separation between Jewish and Christian villages.

²⁸Ma'oz (“Golan,” 538) distinguishes between three models of the village in the Golan: the introverted village, the dispersed village, and the village wherein houses are arranged parallel and perpendicular to each other, with intersecting, though not orthogonally planned, alleys between them. It seems to me that this latter type is identical to the introverted village, where the alleys converge at its center. Dar (“History of the Hermon Settlements,” 31) distinguishes between the “incipient villages,” which might be compared with the dispersed villages, and the “nucleated villages,” identified with the introverted villages.

²⁹Z. U. Ma'oz and A. Killebrew, “Ancient Qaşrin: Synagogue and Village,” *BiblArch* 51 (1988), 5–19; for additional information on the settlement, see A. Killebrew, “Qaşrin: The Village,” in *NEAEHL*, IV, 1222–24; on daily household life, see A. Killebrew and S. Fine, “Qatzrin: Reconstructing Village Life in Talmudic Times,” *BAR* 17 (1991), 44–57, and Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 261–62.

³⁰Z. U. Ma'oz, “Kanaf, Ḥorvat,” in *NEAEHL*, III, 847–50; Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 27–29.

³¹Dauphin and Schonfield, “Settlements of the Roman and Byzantine Periods,” 194–96; Dauphin and Gibson, “Ancient Settlements in Their Landscapes,” 12–14. Another example of the dispersed village is the site of Farj in the eastern Golan Heights; see C. M. Dauphin, “Farj en Gaulanitide: Refuge judéo-chrétien?” *ProC* 34 (1984), 233–45. An especially large Byzantine village—Bab al-Hawa, stretching over an area of nearly 10 ha—was recently excavated in the northeastern Golan Heights; see M. Hartal, “Bab el-Hawa,”

period on the basis of a comparative study of its different building features. The village originally consisted of farmhouses scattered over the slope, and only later building additions made the village denser and created its winding alleys (Fig. 11).

Galilee

The loose distribution of the village's dwellings conforming to the topography, and the absence of any preconceived plan, characterize settlements in Galilee as well. A key site is Chorazin (map coord. 2031.2575), lying on a small hill north of the Sea of Galilee, excavated over a number of years under the supervision of Zeev Yeivin. The site yielded a synagogue and dwellings of different sizes, primarily from the fourth century; however, having undergone additions and renovations, they continued to be used until the early eighth century C.E.³² The village plan (Fig. 12) shows the synagogue located in the center of the village as well as the alleys leading to it from every direction. The houses of the village cover an area of about 3 ha and conform to the topography of the hill.³³ Next to the synagogue, Yeivin's excavations exposed four or five especially large square-shaped dwelling complexes, the area of each being about 900 m² (see reconstruction of the village in Fig. 13). Each complex has a central courtyard surrounded by living quarters, service rooms, and storerooms.³⁴ Unlike the rest of the dwellings, which are modest houses of the simple type (i.e., houses built next to a courtyard), these large structures near the synagogue were probably inhabited by residents of a higher socioeconomic class. We may thus assume that the spacious houses next to the synagogue belonged to the wealthy landowners, whereas the modest houses belonged to the small farmers.

It is a matter of interest that, although many excavations and surveys were conducted in eastern Galilee and lower Golan, no sites have yet been found that can be defined as farmhouses or estate manors. The absence of such sites in areas inhabited mainly by the Jewish population is especially pronounced in light of the abundance of sites of this type found in other areas of the country (see below). It appears that the inhabitants of the

Excavations and Surveys in Israel 10 (1991), 63–66. Byzantine dwellings were uncovered in several villages in the Golan Heights, such as Kafr Nassej (Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 51), Giv'at Orḥa (ibid., 70–71), 'Amra in the Hauran (ibid., 80), etc.

³²Z. Yeivin, "Korazin," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 1 (1982), 64–67; idem, "Korazin—1983/1984," ibid., 3 (1984), 66–71; idem, "Chorazin," in *NEAEHL*, I, 301–4.

³³Yeivin, "Survey of Settlements," 44, claims that the site stretches over an area of 400 × 250 m, i.e., 10 ha. However, an examination of the plan of the settlement (Yeivin, "Chorazin," 302) shows that the maximum area of the site is 90 × 140 m, i.e., no more than 1.5 ha. In considering the plan of the site's remains, one should recall that the settlement was inhabited in the Mameluk period, i.e., late use was made of the Byzantine structures, a fact that could cause changes and additions.

³⁴Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 68–69. A large complex next to the synagogue was also discerned in the village of Arbel west of Tiberias; see Z. Ilan and A. Izdarechet, "Arbel," in *NEAEHL*, I, 87. According to the excavators, this is a public building; however, it appears to me that this is a dwelling complex of a wealthy villager. A similar phenomenon was also discerned in the villages of northern Syria. For example, in the village of Behyo, dated to the 5th–6th centuries, there were two churches in the center of the village and next to them large and spacious dwellings of local farmers who became wealthy. Next to the spacious houses there were much more modest houses in which, according to Poulter ("Townships and Villages," 408–9), laborers and poor farmers lived. Ethnoarchaeological research of pre-modern villages in Jordan shows how the socioeconomic status is reflected by the location and size of the farmer dwellings; see B. Mershem, "Settlement History and Village Space in Late Ottoman Northern Jordan," in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, IV (as above, note 9), 411–12.

Jewish villages continued to live in their villages, despite the economic prosperity and the processes of demographic growth that elsewhere had led to the establishment of farmhouses and smaller satellite villages. As a result, the extended village became the widespread form of settlement among the Jewish rural population in the period under discussion.³⁵

In western Galilee, in a region that belonged to the southern part of the Provincia Phoenicia and was mostly populated by Christians, a number of settlement sites from the Byzantine period were recently surveyed and excavated. The fieldwork was conducted by Rafael Frankel in the framework of his studies on the many sophisticated oil presses that were found interspersed among the remains of the above sites (see his article in this volume). An example of a Byzantine village typical of this area is Ḥorvat Karkara, resting atop a steep hill (270 m above sea level) next to the northern border of modern-day Israel (map. coord. 1708.2755).³⁶ The fragmentary plan of the remains at the site attests to an introverted-type village stretching over an area of about 1.8 ha (Fig. 14). At the western edge of the site, a church dated to the end of the fifth century was dug, and next to it a complex of buildings (perhaps a monastery?), while on the southern edge of the site an elaborate oil press was exposed, exhibiting the importance of olive oil as the main source of income of the site's inhabitants in the Byzantine period.

Another site, in which the remains of seven to eight oil presses were found, is Ḥorvat Din'ila (map coord. 1734.2746), lying on a gentle hill (393 m above sea level), about 3 km southeast of Ḥorvat Karkara.³⁷ The plan of the remains, fragmentary here as well, attests to what appears to be a regular village of the introverted type; however, closer examination reveals that at the center of the site was a kind of square precinct about 30 × 30 m, divided into various rooms (including two oil presses) arranged around an inner courtyard (Fig. 15). According to the excavations conducted at the site, and on the basis of its comparison with other sites, it appears that the "precinct" is none other than a large farmhouse that served as the core of the village from which it grew in the Byzantine period—a small square (not exceeding 0.8 ha) whose houses are arranged very densely.³⁸ Ḥorvat Din'ila therefore represents the process of the creation of a village around the core of a farmhouse.

In addition to villages of the type described above, western Galilee contains farmhouses of varying sizes. One of the largest is that at Khirbet el-Quseir (map coord. 1734.2603), located on a low mountain range (470 m above sea level) on the border between Upper and Lower Galilee, about 18 km east of Akko (Acre). At this site were discerned two separate complexes located 170 m apart. According to Frankel, the western complex functioned, perhaps, as a monastery (on the basis of a chancel screen of a church found in situ), while the eastern complex functioned as a large farmstead.³⁹ The rectangular eastern complex (40 × 52 m; 2,080 m²) is internally divided into courtyards and

³⁵ Y. Hirschfeld, "Jewish Rural Settlement in Judaea in the Early Roman Period," in *The Early Roman Period in the East*, ed. S. E. Alcock (Ann Arbor, forthcoming).

³⁶ See the data on Ḥorvat Karkara and other sites in western Galilee in R. Frankel, "Some Oil Presses from Western Galilee," *BASOR* 286 (1992), 46–49.

³⁷ R. Frankel, "Ḥorvat Din'ila," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 5 (1986), 21–23.

³⁸ Frankel ("Some Oil Presses," 40) bases himself both on excavation findings from Ḥorvat Din'ila and on parallels of square farmhouses from the Roman period found in the area.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 49–58.

rooms of different sizes and has two sophisticated oil presses (Fig. 16). According to its plan, one may assume with certainty that this complex functioned as a domestic and residential structure of a wealthy landowner who lived at the site. The remains of some additional structures (e.g., livestock pens), which most probably served agricultural purposes, were surveyed in the area around the farmhouse. As we shall see below, the existence of farmhouses is not unique to western Galilee, but rather characterizes most of the regions of the country.

Mount Carmel

Ḥorvat Sumaqa (map coord. 1539.2307) is an introverted village on the central Carmel mountain range (Fig. 17). The site, excavated by Shimon Dar, has an area of about 3 ha and was a prosperous Jewish village in the fourth–sixth centuries C.E.⁴⁰ At the center of the site stands a synagogue surrounded by houses built in relatively high density (Fig. 18). To date, only part of a large building has been exposed east of the synagogue; this was either the dwelling complex of a wealthy villager or a multifamily dwelling. At the village's northern end, dozens of industrial installations for wine production were found, and south of the village lies a valley with rich farmland.

At the southern end of Mount Carmel, atop the cliffs of Ramat Hanadiv (map coord. 1441.2166), and about 7 km northeast of Caesarea, I excavated one of the most beautiful farms in the country (Fig. 19). The dwelling dates from the end of the Byzantine period, that is, the mid-sixth to the early seventh century C.E.⁴¹ It is a well-designed structure whose wings are arranged around an inner courtyard (Fig. 20). The area of the complex is 530 m², and its walls, built of local *kurkar* stone, are preserved up to 2 m. The dwelling has two gates: a southern one that opens directly onto the courtyard and a narrower one on the west side. The good state of preservation of the walls, together with the abundance of architectural elements, enabled us to propose its reconstruction (Fig. 21). The wings to the west and north of the courtyard stood two stories high. The ground floor, with a vaulted ceiling, was used for domestic purposes (stables, storage of food and wine vessels), and the living quarters were apparently located on the upper floor. This division is typical of private construction in northern Syria and the Hauran in the Byzantine period.⁴²

The farmhouse exposed at Ramat Hanadiv appears to be the local version of the Roman *villa rustica*.⁴³ It is a functional structure, with no superfluous ornamentation or

⁴⁰S. Dar, "Khirbet Summaqa—1983/1984," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 3 (1984), 98–101; idem, "Khirbet Summaqa—1985," *ibid.*, 4 (1985), 104–7; idem, "Ḥorvat Summaqa—1986," *ibid.*, 5 (1986), 104–6; idem, "Ḥorvat Summaqa—1988/1989," *ibid.*, 9 (1989–90), 25–27; idem, "Ḥorvat Summaqa—1990," *ibid.*, 10 (1991), 104–6; idem, "Sumaqa, Ḥorvat," in *NEAEHL*, IV, 1412–15. In recent years, Dar has been surveying settlements in the Carmel region; see idem, "Survey in Mt. Carmel," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 101–2 (1994), 43–44. On the ecology of the site, see L. K. Horwitz, E. Tchernov, and S. Dar, "Subsistence and Environment on Mount Carmel in the Roman-Byzantine and Medieval Periods: The Evidence from Kh. Sumaqa," *IEJ* 40 (1990), 287–304.

⁴¹Y. Hirschfeld and R. Birger-Calderon, "Early Roman and Byzantine Estates near Caesarea," *IEJ* 41 (1991), 106–9; Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 82–84.

⁴²Tate, *Campagnes*, 5, regarding houses in northern Syria; Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale," 98, regarding houses in the Hauran.

⁴³I have not used the word *villa* because in Byzantine Palestine there were practically no villas in the Roman sense of the term, i.e., a rural estate containing a magnificent dwelling. The term *villa* indicates

signs of luxury, such as a bathhouse, and it is well designed and constructed to meet the needs and standards of its inhabitants. As discussed below, well-to-do farmhouses of this type were an integral part of the landscape in Byzantine Palestine.

Coastal Plain

We have very little archaeological information about villages and farms along the coastal plain, even though this is one of the largest and most fertile regions of the country.⁴⁴ In fact, only two sites along the coastal plain meet the criteria of this study: Shiqmona on the northern coastal plain and a site near Ashkelon in the south.

The site of Shiqmona (map coord. 1462.2479), lying on the seacoast south of Haifa, was called a “Jewish town” (*civitatem Sucamina Iudaeorum*) by Antoninus of Placentia.⁴⁵ Excavations on the plains south and east of the early (biblical) tell, by Yosef Elgavish some twenty years ago, yielded remains of a fourth–seventh-century Byzantine village (Fig. 22), featuring intersecting streets, drainage channels, workshops, shops, dwellings with colorful mosaic floors, and a remarkably rich assortment of small finds, including imported objects.⁴⁶

Roman cultural influence. According to its minimalist definition, it refers to a private house in the village (J. Percival, “The Villa in Italy and the Provinces,” in Wachter, *The Roman World* [as above, note 1], II, 527–28); however, Percival notes that even the smallest villa has no less than twelve rooms measuring 12 × 22 m. Basically, a villa without the elements of luxury and pleasure is not a villa in the Roman sense of the term. In this regard I agree with Ackerman’s definition that “the pleasure factor is what essentially distinguishes the villa residence from the farmhouse and the villa estate from the farm”: J. S. Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (London, 1990), 9. On the small number of Roman “villas” in Palestine, see Dar, *Landscape and Pattern*, 32–35; and S. Applebaum, *Judaea in Hellenistic and Roman Times* (Leiden, 1989), 124–31.

Indeed, near the large cities of Palestine, such as Caesarea, Bet Guvrin, and Ashkelon, we find hints of the existence of luxurious houses outside the city (usually distinguished by their magnificent mosaic floors); however, their association with complexes that may be called “villas” is not at all certain. North of Caesarea a remarkably ornate mosaic floor was exposed that, it has been suggested, is part of a villa: R. Reich, “Some Byzantine Remains,” *Atiqot* (English series) 17 (1985), 212. A similar suggestion was made regarding the mosaic floor found southeast of Bet Guvrin: L. H. Vincent, “Une villa gréco-romaine à Beit Djebrin,” *RevBibl* 31 (1922), 271; and the mosaic floor found 11 km southeast of Ashkelon: L. Y. Rahmani, “The Erez Mosaic Pavement,” *IEJ* 25 (1975), 24. These are random examples, and we should look forward to further discoveries and publications.

⁴⁴The sites along the coast were especially damaged because of both the disintegration of the buildings, resulting from construction with light materials such as mud bricks, and the recycling of old building stones. We can get an idea of the abundance of sites in this area in the Byzantine period from the survey made in the central Sharon region (‘Emeq Hefer); see Y. Porath, S. Dar, and S. Applebaum, *The History and Archaeology of ‘Emek-Hefer* (Tel-Aviv, 1985, in Hebrew). Additional sites that may be associated with the subject of this article, although their functioning as monasteries or villas is not clear, are Tell ‘Afar south of Caesarea (map coord. 1387.2058) (Y. Porath, “Tel ‘Afar,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 7–8 [1988–89], 1–3) and Pardessiya east of Netanya (map coord. 1410.1903) (E. Yannai and E. Ayalon, “Pardessiya [Kh. Umm el-Fulus],” *ibid.*, 10 [1991], 17).

⁴⁵Antoninus, *Itinerarium* 3, ed. P. Geyer, *Itineraria et alia geographica*, CCSL 175 (Turnhout, 1966), 130. The term *civitas* used by Antoninus is a broad one that includes, on the one hand, large cities such as Tiberias (par. 7) and Elusa (par. 34) and, on the other, places that were no more than large villages, such as Shiqmona and Nazareth (par. 5). In the chapter on the Samaritans, Antoninus mentions Scythopolis and Sebaste as major Samaritan cities, noting that in addition to them there are also “towns and villages” (*civitates vel vicos*) (par. 8). In this context, it appears that one would not be mistaken in interpreting the term Antoninus used for Shiqmona as “large village” or “town.”

⁴⁶Y. Elgavish, *Shiqmona on the Seacoast of Mount Carmel* (Tel Aviv, 1994, in Hebrew). For more historical and archaeological references relating to Shiqmona, see Tsafir, Di Segni, and Green, *Tabula Imperii Romani*, 237.

According to the excavator, the site stretches over an area of about 11 ha;⁴⁷ however, this assertion appears to be rather exaggerated. At probe excavations I conducted on the fringes of the site, it became clear that the area of the Byzantine settlement, including the anchorage north of the tell and the cemetery on the slope of the mountain east of the site, is no more than 5 ha.⁴⁸ Shiqmona was a large Jewish village that derived its affluence from its location along the coastal road and from the diverse opportunities available to its inhabitants: commerce, industry, farming, fishing, and food production connected with these sectors.

The site near Ashkelon is probably one of the most remarkable complexes found in Byzantine Palestine (Fig. 23). Situated next to the route of the traditional Via Maris, about 4.5 km northeast of ancient Ashkelon and about 2.3 km east of the sea (map coord. 1108.1216), the site, according to its discoverer and excavator, Yigal Israel, yielded a 0.8 ha farm (Fig. 24) containing a private bathhouse, an oil press, two winepresses, fishponds, four or five storehouses, and five kilns for sophisticated potters' workshops.⁴⁹ This complex is an unusual combination of dwellings and industrial buildings for the production and marketing of food products.

The storehouses in the middle of the complex, the built area of which is 2,000 m², supported another story, which apparently served as living quarters. To the east and west of the storehouses were found two winepresses located in a large hall with five appended rooms (290 m²), on top of which stood a story of living quarters paved with a mosaic floor (remains of which were found in the debris). Northeast of the large hall, a small bathhouse with a thermal room containing a hypocaust and a furnace was exposed, and next to it a dressing room and lavatory with a toilet and sink. Next to the bathhouse were ponds for spawning fish that fed from the overflow of the bath's waters. Further northeast an oil press was found, and southwest of the complex, large and elaborate potters' kilns containing "Ashkelon jars" such as those mentioned in the sources.⁵⁰ The integration of various types of industrial installations next to each other ensured constant economic activity all year long. The location of the "third mile estate" (as the excavator calls it) alongside the coastal road is not coincidental, as it enabled the marketing of products either by land or via the nearby port of Ashkelon.

This type of "industrial estate" apparently was not a unique phenomenon. About 1.5 km north of Caesarea, remains of a complex containing a small bathhouse and fishponds (Fig. 25) were exposed by an Italian excavation team that understood the complex to be a Christian baptistery; however, far more plausible is the suggestion of the U.S. team that

⁴⁷Elgavish, *Shiqmona on the Seacoast*, 109. In a previous publication, Elgavish claimed that the area of Byzantine Shiqmona was no less than 20 ha ("Shiqmona," in *NEAEHL*, IV, 1373). His publications generally contain surprising unsubstantiated findings, e.g., that in the center of the settlement there was "a very large Christian monastery" (Elgavish, *Shiqmona on the Seacoast*, 111), that "many houses had a nymphaeum" (*ibid.*, 116, ill. 91), or that an amulet that was found "is against backaches" (*ibid.*, ill. 125). The main deficiency in these publications is the absence of plans of the remains of the Byzantine buildings.

⁴⁸Y. Hirschfeld, "Tel Shiqmona—1994," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 106 (1996), 28–29 (in Hebrew).

⁴⁹Y. Israel, "Ashqelon," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 13 (1993), 100–105; *idem*, "The Economy of the Gaza-Ashkelon Region in the Byzantine Period in the Light of the Archaeological Survey and Excavations of the 'Third Mile Estate' near Ashkelon," *Michmanim* 8 (1995), 119–32 (in Hebrew).

⁵⁰On "Gaza jars" and "Ashkelon jars" in the Byzantine period, see P. Mayerson, *Monks, Martyrs, Soldiers and Saracens* (Jerusalem, 1994), 347–51.

this was part of a villa or, based on a comparison to Ashkelon, an industrial estate belonging to a wealthy inhabitant of Caesarea.⁵¹

Samaria

Ḥorvat Zikhrin (map coord. 1466.1634), located in the foothills of western Samaria, about 6 km southeast of Aphek, is one of the most extensively excavated Byzantine villages in Israel.⁵² The village exposed by Moshe Fisher stretches over an area of about 2 ha and contains about eight or nine large dwelling complexes built on the southern and southeastern slopes of the hill (Fig. 26). South of the settlement, several presses for oil and wine were found, while northeast and southeast, about 100 m from the village, were grave sites. At the center of the village stood a basilical church and next to it the remains of a small bathhouse, which apparently was used by the villagers. According to the excavator, the northwest part of the settlement contained a monastery and pilgrim hostel; however, this claim has not been sufficiently proven.

Ḥorvat Zikhrin represents a long line of Byzantine villages that were surveyed and partially excavated on the western periphery of the central mountain range. Two of them—Khirbet Najar and Khirbet el-Buraq—have been carefully studied by Shimon Dar. The physical area of the sites varies from 2 to about 3 ha, and the excavator estimated that their population numbered between 1,000 and 1,500.⁵³ Khirbet Najar lies at the edge of the hill country, about 15 km east of the coast (map coord. 1511.1696). The village plan is based on a detailed survey of its buildings (Fig. 27). The survey recorded about thirty-five structural remains including several oil presses, some of which are the largest recorded in the region. Four principal entrances to the settlement were observed, as well as a network of narrow alleys. The width of the lanes and alleys varies from 2.5 to 3 m. On a prominent hill some 300 m northwest of the village, several dozen rock-cut tombs were found. The water supply had been stored in cisterns and reservoirs.

Khirbet el-Buraq lies at the western edge of a spur, on broad natural terraces, about 10 km east of Khirbet Najar (map coord. 1618.1681). The good preservation of the site enabled the surveyor to estimate the number of houses at about sixty to seventy (Fig. 28). A small church was uncovered at the settlement's highest point. In the area of agricultural

⁵¹K. G. Holum et al., *King Herod's Dream: Caesarea on the Sea* (New York-London, 1988), 181–85. It is not impossible to accept the new interpretation of the site as a small commercial bathhouse for the wealthy citizens of Caesarea. See F. L. Horton, "A Sixth-Century Bath in Caesarea's Suburbs and the Transformation of Bathing Culture in Late Antiquity," in *Caesarea Maritima: A Retrospective after Two Millennia*, ed. A. Raban and K. G. Holum (Leiden, 1996), 177–89. Four km north of Caesarea lies Tell Tadwira, which was perhaps another estate (or a monastery?); see D. Everman, "Survey of the Northern Coastal Area and of the Aqueducts," in *Caesarea Papers*, ed. R. L. Vann, *Journal of Roman Archaeology*, suppl. (Ann Arbor, 1992), 183–84.

⁵²M. Fisher, "Khirbet Zikhrin—1982," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 2 (1983), 114–15; idem, "Khirbet Zikhrin—1984," *ibid.*, 3 (1984), 113–14; idem, "Khirbet Zikhrin—1984/85," *ibid.*, 4 (1985), 117–19; idem, "Ḥorvat Zikhrin—1987–1989," *ibid.*, 12 (1993), 40–44. At the outset of his study, Fisher ("Khirbet Zikhrin—1982," 114) stated that the area of the site is 0.9 ha. At a later date ("Ḥorvat Zikhrin—1987–1989," 40), he stated that the area of the site is 3 ha. My estimate, on the basis of measurements made on the plan published by the excavator (*ibid.*, fig. 48), is that the built-up area of the village is about 2 ha.

⁵³Dar, *Landscape and Pattern*, 47–76. This estimation seems to be exaggerated. I would argue that in a village of 3 ha the population was about 750, i.e., 250 souls for one hectare; see J. R. Zorn, "Estimating the Population Size of Ancient Settlements: Methods, Problems, Solutions, and a Case Study," *BASOR* 295 (1994), 32.

installations, which extends north of the site, several rock-cut threshing floors, wine-presses, limekilns, cisterns, quarries, and tombs were found. This is a rare example of a quarter devoted to the crafts and agricultural industry engaged in by the inhabitants of the ancient village. The water needed for man and beast had been stored in at least fifty to sixty cisterns that were found in the settlement. A large number of cisterns were recorded in the fields close to the settlement. Khirbet el-Buraq and Khirbet Najar can be classified as medium-sized villages, as were many other villages in Samaria during the Roman-Byzantine period.⁵⁴

Judea

A new type of farmhouse, hitherto unknown, was discovered at Ḥorvat Ḥazzan (map coord. 1409.1028), lying in the foothills of the inner coastal plain of Judea, about 10 km south of Bet Guvrin. The remains of the dwelling, found lying above the surface (Fig. 29), are dated to the second half of the fourth century C.E. (beneath the surface were various tunnels and halls from the early Roman period).⁵⁵ The farmhouse of Ḥorvat Ḥazzan has two wings standing perpendicular to each other: a northern one (290 m²), with several rooms and a small bathhouse, and a larger western one (340 m²) containing service rooms (Fig. 30). A massive tower (8.8 × 7.6 m; 67 m²) with thick walls was found attached to the southern wall of the western wing and surrounded by a well-built talus, or sloped retaining wall, of medium-sized roughly hewn stones (Fig. 31). The interior of the tower was divided into three rooms; judging from the thickness of the walls, the tower probably stood three to four stories high.

⁵⁴The following references mention other Byzantine rural sites in this region. At Zur Natan (Ḥorvat Migdal), remains of a village and a Samaritan synagogue of the 4th–5th centuries C.E. were exposed. Besides the settlement, dozens of installations and farmed terraces were surveyed; see E. Ayalon, W. Neidinger, and E. Matthews, “Ḥorvat Migdal,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 9 (1989–90), 137–38; eidem, “Ḥorvat Migdal (Zur Natan)—1990,” *ibid.*, 10 (1991), 114–15; eidem, “Zur Natan (Ḥorvat Migdal)—1991,” *ibid.*, 13 (1993), 45–46; E. Ayalon and E. Yannai, “Et-Ṭaiyiba Map, Survey,” *ibid.*, 10 (1991), 18–19. At Qadum (Qedumim), west of Nablus, the remains of a Roman-Byzantine Samaritan village with elaborate oil presses were discovered; see I. Magen, “Qedumim,” in *NEAEHL*, IV, 1225–27; Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 264. At Khirbet el-Bireh, northeast of Lydda, remains of a small village with a church were exposed; see S. Dar and Z. Safrai, “Khirbet el-Bireh,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 1 (1982), 11–13; S. Dar, “Khirbet el-Bireh—1983,” *ibid.*, 3 (1984), 11–13. At Ḥermeshit, east of Lydda, remains of a small village, a chapel, and agricultural installations were exposed; see Z. Greenhut and M. Iron-Lubin, “Ḥorvat Ḥermeshit (Ne’ot Qedumim)—1990,” *ibid.*, 10 (1991), 123–24; M. Iron-Lubin, “Ḥ. Ḥermeshit (Ne’ot Qedumim)—1993,” *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 103 (1994), 58–60. Besides these villages, quite a few Byzantine farms were excavated, such as the remains at Giv’at Ehud, Mishmar David, and several farmhouses in the Jerusalem and Hebron hills area. At Giv’at Ehud, east of Lydda (Modi’in area), a farmhouse from the end of the Byzantine period was excavated; see H. Hizmi, “Giv’at Ehud (Yehudit),” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 3 (1984), 32–33. At Mishmar David, southeast of Lydda, remains of a Byzantine villa were discovered; see Y. Porath, “Mishmar David,” *ibid.*, 6 (1987–88), 81–82. In the Jerusalem area, remains of a number of Byzantine villas were excavated: on the Shu’afat ridge north of the city (A. On and Y. Rafyono, “Jerusalem, Khirbet er-Ras,” *ibid.*, 13 [1993], 71–72), near ‘Ein et-Tut west of the city (J. Gat, “Khirbet ‘Ein et-Tut,” *ibid.*, 1 [1982], 52), and in Beit Zafafah south of the city (N. Feig, “Jerusalem, Beit Zafafah,” *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 101–2 [1994], 86–88). At Khirbet Hilal, in the Hebron hills (Gush Etzion), remains of a Byzantine farm were discovered (D. Amit, “Khirbet Hilal,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 10 [1991], 150–51), and at another site, Khirbet Daḥ-Daḥ, remains of an industrial installation with a 6th-century C.E. inscription were found (idem, “Khirbet Daḥ-Daḥ,” *ibid.*, 9 [1989–90], 162–63).

⁵⁵S. Gudovitch, Y. Mintzker, and G. Avni, “Ḥorvat Ḥazan,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 4 (1985), 46–48; G. Avni et al., “Aḥuzat Ḥazzan,” in *The Hiding Complexes in the Judean Shephelah*, ed. A. Kloner and Y. Tepper (Tel Aviv, 1987, in Hebrew), 123–27.

This new type of farmhouse is in contrast to the introverted complex of Ramat Hanadiv, whose wings surround an enclosed courtyard: the building at Ḥorvat Ḥazzan is open on one side and has a tower on the other. The tower probably served as the living quarters of the estate owner, as the thick, high walls of the tower, as well as the talus, offered its inhabitants security and, at the same time, gave pronounced architectural expression to the owner's command over his lands.

The western fringes of the Judean desert (i.e., the long strip east of the Jerusalem-Hebron axis) are, on the one hand, characterized by large villages and, on the other, by different types of farms. Among the large villages in this area I mention two: Teqoa, south of Bethlehem, and Khirbet Susiya in the southeastern Hebron hills. Teqoa (map coord. 1701.1157), home of the prophet Amos, lies on a hill on the fringes of the Judean desert (Fig. 32). A survey I conducted at the site, within the framework of the Map of Herodium Project, exposed the outline of the Byzantine settlement (Fig. 33).⁵⁶ The village's dwellings, stretching over an area of about 6 ha, were built close together, as in an introverted village. At the northwestern end of the village stand the remains of a large basilical church, and at the center of the village, remains of yet another, smaller one. Two to three unusually large dwelling units were found in the southeastern part of the settlement; each had an inner courtyard surrounded by a large number of rooms.

Khirbet Susiya (map coord. 1596.0904), stretching over two kidney-shaped hills, is about the same size as Teqoa (Fig. 34).⁵⁷ The dwellings are relatively large, and most of them have courtyards, water cisterns, and subterranean storage caves. The western part of the village includes the impressive remains of a synagogue dating to the early fourth century, which, after renovations, continued to be used until the eighth century C.E. An especially wide alley cutting across the settlement from southeast to northwest leads to the synagogue; the rest of the passageways are narrow alleys and paths between the closely built dwellings.

The good security conditions that characterized Byzantine Palestine allowed many farms to exist in the desert areas. The farmhouses along the fringes of the Judean desert may be divided into three categories: the simple farmhouse, the complex farmhouse, and the farmhouse with a tower.

The simple farmhouse is an elongated rectangular structure divided into two to three rooms, with its facade facing the courtyard stretching to the east or south of the dwelling, such as the Byzantine farmhouse exposed at Khirbet et-Tinat (map coord. 1777.1396), about 9 km northeast of Jerusalem.⁵⁸ The farmhouse contains three rooms with en-

⁵⁶Hirschfeld, *Map of Herodium*, 63–65.

⁵⁷A. Negev, "Khirbet Susiya," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 3 (1984), 101–2; idem, "Susiya, Khirbet," in *NEAEHL*, IV, 1415–17; idem, "Excavations at Carmel (Kh. Susiya) in 1984: Preliminary Report," *IEJ* 35 (1985), 231–52; Z. Yeivin, *Ḥorvat Susiya* (Jerusalem, 1993); Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 36–38. According to Negev ("Susiya, Khirbet," 1416), the area of the site is 6 ha. Another site that was a flourishing Byzantine village in the Judean desert is 'Ein Gedi, the remains of which were partly excavated; see G. Hadas, "'En Gedi," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 103 (1994), 89–90. A long-term excavation at the site under my direction will supply much information concerning the daily life of its inhabitants during the Roman-Byzantine period.

⁵⁸O. Sion, "Adam," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 101–2 (1994), 74–75. Similar farmhouses were surveyed by H. Goldfus and A. Golani ("Map of Wadi el-Makukh," in *Archaeological Survey of the Hill Country of Benjamin*, ed. I. Finkelstein and Y. Magen [Jerusalem, 1993], 265–338, sites 317 and 345) northeast of Jerusalem, and by the present writer in the area of Herodium, southeast of Jerusalem (Hirschfeld, *Map of Herodium*, 60–61, site 30).

trances facing east toward the courtyard (Fig. 35). The north room, which is larger than the others, was apparently the family's main living space.

A more developed type of farmhouse may be found at Khirbet er-Rabi'a (map coord. 1733.1138), lying in an agricultural area about 3 km east of Teqoa.⁵⁹ This is a well-planned structure (18.5×22.2 m; 410 m²) with wings built on either side of the inner courtyard (Fig. 36): the west wing contains four living rooms, the northernmost of which is especially large and wide; the east wing apparently functioned as the service quarters. Remains of decorated architectural elements attest to the affluence of its owner.

The third type of farmhouse, that with a tower, is represented at the site of Rujum el-Qasr (map coord. 1666.1092), located about 8 km northeast of Hebron. At an excavation I conducted at the site about twenty years ago, I found typical fourth–sixth-century C.E. Byzantine pottery on the floor of the structure.⁶⁰ At that time I suggested the structure was a fortress comprising part of the *limes* of the Roman army on the eastern frontier of Palestine. Today, however, in light of the discovery of the towered farmhouse at Ḥorvat Ḥazzan, on the one hand, and of similar towered farmhouses in the Negev, on the other (see below), the site may be interpreted as a fortified farm.⁶¹

Rujum el-Qasr consists of a rectangular courtyard (27×28.2 m; 760 m²) surrounded by a wall, with a massive tower on its western side (Fig. 37). Rooms were appended to the south wall of the courtyard, and a roofed pool was built next to its north wall. The entrance to the courtyard is located north of the tower. The tower itself is almost a square (8.2×8.8 m) with thick walls (1.2 m); it is surrounded by a built talus, the base of which is 2.4 m thick. This talus is typologically similar to that at Ḥorvat Ḥazzan. The tower's interior division into three rooms—two small and one large—is also reminiscent of the towered farmhouse at Ḥorvat Ḥazzan.

Negev Desert

From the sites on the fringes of the Judean desert we reach the “great research laboratory” of Byzantine rural settlement—the Negev desert—which offers optimal conditions for examining its nature. On the one hand, both the security that prevailed in the Byzantine period (in contrast to the unsettled conditions that characterized the late Roman period of the 2nd and 3rd centuries) and the unlimited land reserves permitted a

⁵⁹The site was published by me as possibly a monastery; see *Map of Herodium*, 82–84, site 66.

⁶⁰Y. Hirschfeld, “A Line of Byzantine Forts along the Eastern Highway of the Hebron Hills,” *Qadmoniot* 12 (1979), 80–81 (in Hebrew).

⁶¹The “military” interpretation of Rujum el-Qasr was based on a survey I conducted along the eastern zone of the Hebron hills, stretching from Teqoa in the north to the region of Khirbet Susiya in the south. From the results of the survey, an alleged chain of three fortresses attributed to the early Byzantine period (4th century C.E.) was found, primarily on the basis of the excavation at Rujum el-Qasr. Recently, however, an excavation was conducted at one of the “fortresses,” Rujum Khamiri, by Yuval Baruch, who has dated it conclusively to the 1st century B.C.E. (personal communication). It should be noted also that with respect to the second “fortress,” Khirbet el-Qasr, which I published together with Amos Kloner (Y. Hirschfeld and A. Kloner, “Khirbet el-Qasr: A Byzantine Fort in the Judean Desert,” *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 8 [1988–89], 5–20), it is not certain that it is from the Byzantine period. Thus the military concept based on a “chain of fortresses” in the same period of time is erroneous. This is another example of the problematics involved in survey findings.

wide distribution of settlement in previously uninhabited regions.⁶² On the other hand, the remoteness and aridity of the Negev desert “froze” the picture of Byzantine settlement and, more so than in any other region of the country, have preserved the remains to this day.

Is the settlement in the Negev representative of farming settlements elsewhere in the country? The answer appears to be ambivalent. One should remember that desert conditions forced the settlers of the Negev to work farmland that was at times far from their homes, as compared to the villagers of the north whose fertile lands were near their dwellings. As a result, the settlement distribution in the Negev is especially wide and is characterized by a diverse range of settlements: from a single farmhouse, to a cluster of farmhouses and small hamlets, to villages, and very large villages (erroneously called “cities”).⁶³

Another phenomenon apparently unique to the Negev in the Byzantine period is a large seminomadic population that set up seasonal settlements.⁶⁴ Some of these sites were no more than clusters of farmhouses, but several of them were full-fledged villages; it is therefore possible to include them in the picture of rural settlement in Byzantine Palestine.

Despite the unique character of rural settlement in the Negev, it is also representative of settlement in the rest of the country's regions at given times. The processes that took place in the Negev in the Byzantine period are, in my opinion, typical of similar settlement patterns that developed in the areas north of the Negev in various periods, such as the Iron Age, the Hellenistic period, and the early Roman period. However, unlike the Negev of the Byzantine and early Arab periods that underwent an extraordinary era of prosperity, the northern regions were continuously settled from one period to the next. Therefore, their remains as we know them represent the ongoing settlement of a number of periods. In contrast, the Negev exhibits the creation of individual farms and of relatively “young” hamlets from the Byzantine and the early Arab periods.

Northern Negev

As already mentioned, the results of the Archaeological Survey in the Negev have furnished us with quantitative and qualitative data for the region. The northernmost Negev, represented by the map of Naḥal Yattir (map coord. 140.070), about 15 km east

⁶²On the relatively good security situation on the frontiers of southern Palestine, see B. Isaac, *The Limits of Empire: The Roman Army in the East* (Oxford, 1990), 208–15. I agree with R. Rubin (“The Debate over Climatic Changes in the Negev, Fourth–Seventh Centuries C.E.,” *PEQ* 121 [1989], 71–78) that we have enough historical and archaeological evidence indicating that there were no climatic changes in the Negev in the last two millennia. The same conclusion has been arrived at regarding the Jordan Valley by W. Van Zeist, “Past and Present Environments of the Jordan Valley,” in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, II (as above, note 12), 201.

⁶³See above, note 21.

⁶⁴Rosen and Avni, who investigated the seminomadic sites in the southern Negev highlands, call these sites “seasonal farming encampments,” which were occupied for a few months during winter and spring (S. A. Rosen and G. Avni, “The Edge of the Empire: The Archaeology of Pastoral Nomads in the Southern Negev Highlands in Late Antiquity,” *BiblArch* 56 [1993], 196). The rest of the year, during the summer months, these became “ghost settlements,” awaiting the return of their owners in the winter and spring. See also S. A. Rosen, “Nomads in Archaeology: A Response to Finkelstein and Perevolotsky,” *BASOR* 287 (1992), 75–85.

of Beersheba,⁶⁵ is a relatively moderate desert area with an average annual rainfall of 200–300 mm. No less than 267 sites were recorded on this map (scale: 1:20,000) of more than 100 km². However, only ninety of these sites have yielded pottery attesting to Byzantine presence.⁶⁶ By discarding inconclusive material and uncertain agricultural sites, such as small sites with many chronological levels or water cisterns and dams, I reduced the number to sixty-seven sites, whose ceramic finds represent primarily, if not solely, the Byzantine period (Fig. 38). This method yields a map of Byzantine settlement in the area that is more accurate than that done for any other area in the country.⁶⁷

The sixty-seven Byzantine sites of the Naḥal Yattir map may be categorized into the following typological groups: five villages (7.4%), six hamlets (9.0%), thirty-nine farmhouses (58.2%), fifteen field towers (22.4%), and two monasteries (3.0%).⁶⁸ The sites defined as villages are characterized by a relatively large area (between 1 and 5.4 ha) with a high density of dwellings, that is, the remains of the houses either touch or are close to each other. The discovery of five villages in an area of 100 km², each covering an average area of 20 km², indicates a significant concentration of settlement.

A phenomenon hitherto practically unknown in the country's northern sites is the existence of hamlets, as represented on the Naḥal Yattir map. These are small satellite settlements that are no more than clusters of farmhouses built at an average distance of up to 40 m apart. This proximity attests to some sort of connection, most probably familial.⁶⁹ The number of dwellings varies from one hamlet to the next; some of them contain two to three houses, while others have ten or more. A typical hamlet is site 158, located in the eastern part of the Naḥal Yattir map.⁷⁰ Situated on both sides of a small riverbed (Fig. 39), the site contains four dwellings having an average distance of about 60 m between them (Fig. 40). Their construction method is uniform; however, the variable sizes of these structures are significant: the smallest dwellings have two to three rooms, while the large ones have six to seven. This variation most probably reflects the various degrees of affluence of the hamlet's inhabitants.⁷¹

Besides the villages and hamlets, a total of thirty-nine farmhouses appear on the Naḥal Yattir map, that is, there are about eight farmhouses for each village on the map. This average number seems to be true for the rest of the country, although this is hard

⁶⁵The survey of the Naḥal Yattir map was conducted in 1983–84 under the supervision of Yehudah Govrin (Y. Govrin, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Naḥal Yattir (139)* [Jerusalem, 1991]).

⁶⁶*Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁷Safrai's maps (*Economy*, figs. 31, 32), which are based on general surveys on the Carmel and in western Samaria, are misleading.

⁶⁸According to Govrin (*Map of Naḥal Yattir*), two monasteries were discovered: one atop Tel Yeshua (site 125) and one that was part of the Byzantine settlement on top of Tel 'Ira (site 240). From an examination of the remains in the field, it seems to me that the alleged monastery at Tel Yeshua is none other than a complex farmhouse, similar to the farmhouse excavated by Beit-Aryieh on the summit of Har Beriah, north of Tel 'Ira; see Y. Beit-Aryieh and I. Finkelstein, "Tel 'Ira—1980," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 74–75 (1980), 33. In contrast, the church on Ḥorvat So'a (site 150) appears to me to be part of a monastery complex.

⁶⁹On familial ties as the basis for rural settlement in northern Syria, see Tate, *Campaignes*, 259. For details of the circumstances that led to the creation of hamlets, see Safrai, *Economy*, 69–71. For an archaeological definition of *hamlet*, see Homès-Frédéricq, General Introduction, 38.

⁷⁰Govrin, *Map of Naḥal Yattir*, 101–3.

⁷¹The number of rooms as an indication of the wealth of the houseowner is a known criterion in ethnoarchaeological studies; see L. Horne, "Reading Village Plans: Architecture and Social Change in Northeastern Iran," *Expedition* 33 (1991), 49.

to prove. Several of these farmhouses are quite large, such as the farmhouse at site 184 covering an area of 4,000 m².⁷² The dwelling complex, which is located in a hilly farm area (Fig. 41), is divided into three separate, yet attached, dwelling units (Fig. 42), most probably reflecting the natural development of several generations of the family that occupied the farmhouse.

A large farmhouse reminiscent of the introverted plan and the high location of the farmhouse at Ramat Hanadiv is site 242 on the Naḥal Yattir map, located at the summit of Har Bariaḥ (523 m above sea level), northeast of Tel 'Ira (Fig. 43). The site itself was excavated by Yitzhak Beit-Aryieh, who dates it to the fifth–sixth century C.E.⁷³ The plan of the dwelling, which measures 265 m², consists of an inner courtyard surrounded by various wings and reveals the development of the building from a simple farmhouse to a towerlike building (Fig. 44). Its high location, at the top of Har Bariaḥ, emphasizes its command over the neighboring farmlands; this is in contrast to most farmhouses, which are located at lower elevations. One may ask whether this difference reflects the varying social origins of the different farm owners. Southwest of the main building lie the remains of a large sheepfold, which indicates the agricultural character of the site.

Central Negev

The maps of the central Negev differ from that of Naḥal Yattir. The further south one goes, the fewer villages one finds and, in contrast, the greater the relative number of hamlets, farmhouses, and seasonal settlements. As discussed below, very large villages did exist, and the many hamlets and farmhouses formed part of their rural hinterland. Moreover, we now encounter yet another widespread phenomenon—the seasonal settlements of the seminomadic population.

These processes are well demonstrated in the two survey maps of Rudolph Cohen in the area of Sede Boqer, about 7 km north of Oboda (map coord. 120.030).⁷⁴ This is a purely desert region with a low annual rainfall of 100–150 mm and rocky soil, except for the riverbeds where one finds alluvial deposits suitable for farming.

On the two maps of Sede Boqer, the overall area of which is 200 km², 266 sites were recorded. On the basis of the ceramic finds, I isolated eighty-six sites that may be attributed to the Byzantine period (Fig. 45). This map is devoid of villages; however, seventeen hamlets (19.8%), twenty-seven farms (31.4%), one fortress, two open mosques from the Umayyad period, two seasonal settlements, and four field towers were recorded. An analysis of the plans of sites that have been defined as hamlets on the map of Sede Boqer is summarized in the table accompanying the text.

It appears, therefore, that the average size of a hamlet is 0.5 ha and that each hamlet

⁷²Govrin, *Map of Naḥal Yattir*, 119–20. A modern farmhouse of a Bedouin family was recently built on the remains of the Byzantine site. The similarities are in size and inner divisions into three units of dwellings for one family.

⁷³Beit-Aryieh and Finkelstein, "Tel 'Ira"; and Govrin, *Map of Naḥal Yattir*, 143.

⁷⁴The Sede Boqer maps were surveyed from 1965 to 1968; see R. Cohen, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Sede Boqer—East (168)* (Jerusalem, 1981); idem, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Sede Boqer—West (167)* (Jerusalem, 1985). More data on these maps and excellent analysis are presented by B. Rosen and I. Finkelstein, "Subsistence Patterns, Carrying Capacity and Settlement Oscillations in the Negev Highlands," *PEQ* 124 (1992), 42–58.

HAMLETS ON THE SEDE BOQER MAPS

Site Number	Area (m ²)	Number of Dwelling Units	Average Number of Rooms per Unit	Average Distance between Units (m)
5	2,100	5	—	8.8
93	2,100	6	2.5	15.0
73	2,400	7	2.6	15.0
53	2,800	3	1.0	50.0
126	3,300	3	1.3	45.0
109	9,600	7	2.7	20.0
31	12,000	6	1.6	32.5
92	20,000	19	1.2	25.0

The eight hamlets here are those published with a plan, by Cohen, and are from both the east and west maps (R. Cohen, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Sede Boqer—East (168)* [Jerusalem, 1981]; idem, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Sede Boqer—West (167)* [Jerusalem, 1985]).

contained about five dwelling units, with an average distance of 26.6 m between them. This is apparently the optimal distance that would provide privacy and space for each family, yet it is close enough to create the feeling of community, an important factor when living in a desert region.⁷⁵ The dwelling units are relatively small, having an average of two rooms each.

An example of a typical hamlet is site 109, whose dwellings stretch over an area of 1 ha (Fig. 46). There are seven dwellings at the site, with an average distance of 20 m between them. Most of them are relatively simple rectangular structures divided into one to three rooms. At the south end of the site is a larger dwelling unit of six rooms arranged in two wings standing perpendicular to each other.⁷⁶ If we assume that each dwelling housed an average family of four, then the entire site numbered twenty-five to thirty inhabitants.

Of the twenty-seven Byzantine farmhouses on the Sede Boqer map, it appears that most are simple rectangular structures similar to the farmhouses surveyed in the peripheral areas of the Judean desert. An example of such a farmhouse is site 81 on the Sede Boqer East map.⁷⁷ One can see the simplicity of the dwelling's plan (Fig. 47): the rectan-

⁷⁵An interesting comparison may be made between the hamlets and the lauras of the Judean desert. The average distance between the monks' cells in the lauras of the Judean desert is 35 m (Y. Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* [New Haven, Conn.-London, 1992], 180), i.e., a bit greater than the distance between dwelling units in the hamlets. In my estimation, the recluse monks also thought it important to locate their cells relatively close to each other in order to obscure the sense of loneliness of the desert. The distance between the cells relative to the average distance between the villagers' houses is perhaps connected to the ascetic approach of monastic society. This "optimal difference" may also be seen as a translation into stone of a Bedouin tent camp tradition. Such phenomena appear in Syria; see N. Daker, "Contribution à l'étude de l'évolution de l'habitat bédouin en Syrie," in *Nomades et sédentaires: Perspectives ethnoarchéologiques*, ed. O. Ourenche (Paris, 1984), 51–80.

⁷⁶This dwelling merited a separate discussion on the Survey map; see Cohen, *Map of Sede Boqer—East*, 69–70, site 111 (even though it is part of site 109). The structure has two clear levels of occupation that reflect the process of the family's establishment; see Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 39.

⁷⁷Cohen, *Map of Sede Boqer—East*, 41–42, site 81. The potsherds found at the site are from the Byzantine period only. On the structure as the typical dwelling of the small farmer on the outskirts of the region, see Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 39. Haiman's interpretation ("Agriculture and Nomad-State Relations,"

gular structure (exterior measurements: 12×5.7 m) is divided into two rooms with entrances facing east toward a courtyard surrounded by a stone fence. The lines of the terraces and stone fences of the tracts of farmland extend from the walls of the dwelling and the courtyard.

Negev Highlands

The picture of Byzantine settlement obtained from the six survey maps of the Negev highlands is similar to that observed on the two maps of Sede Boqer. This is a dry, hilly region (700–800 m) stretching southwest of Oboda and having an average annual rainfall not exceeding 100 mm. The six maps are: the Mount Nafḥa map (no. 196) surveyed by Yeshayahu Lander; the Mizpé Ramon (no. 200) and Mount Ḥamran East (no. 199) and West (no. 198) maps surveyed by Motti Haiman; the Makhtesh Ramon map (no. 204) surveyed by Steven Rosen; and the Mount Saggi map (no. 225) surveyed by Gideon Avni.⁷⁸

In light of the overwhelming amount of information emerging from these maps, I present below a representative sample of the general data accompanied by a number of examples. In the 600 km² of these maps there are 439 purely Byzantine sites.⁷⁹ They are divided into three different settlement groups: thirty-two hamlets (7.3%), sixty-eight farmhouses (15.5%), and 339 seasonal settlements (77.2%).

Based on the results of the surveys, it became clear that the area of the average hamlet is 0.66 ha, containing an average of 7.5 dwellings with an average distance of about 17.3 m between them. Two types of hamlets may be distinguished: the dispersed and the introverted. The majority of hamlets are of the first type, a small settlement consisting of a cluster of farmhouses, such as site 53 on the Mount Ḥamran West map (Fig. 48). Six dwellings were found scattered along the riverbed beside tracts of farmland.⁸⁰ The dwellings are built according to the design typifying the simple farmhouse: a rectangular structure divided into two to three rooms, with its facade facing a courtyard surrounded by a stone fence. The number of rooms varies from one dwelling to the next, ranging between one and four rooms per structure.

34–35) that this is a unique type of early Islamic farmhouse cannot be accepted. This is the most common type of farmhouse found along the marginal regions from the Byzantine and early Muslim periods.

⁷⁸Y. Lander, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Har Nafḥa (196)* (Jerusalem, 1990); M. Haiman, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Har Ḥamran—Southwest (198)* (Jerusalem, 1986); idem, *Map of Mizpé Ramon—Southwest (200)* (Jerusalem, 1991); idem, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southeast (199)* (Jerusalem, 1994); S. A. Rosen, *Archaeological Survey of Israel: Map of Makhtesh Ramon (204)* (Jerusalem, 1994); Avni, *Map of Har Saggi* (as above, note 10). A summary of these surveys have been published by M. Haiman, “Preliminary Report of the Western Negev Highlands Emergency Survey,” *IEJ* 39 (1989), 173–91, and S. A. Rosen, “Demographic Trends in the Negev Highlands: Preliminary Reports from the Emergency Survey,” *BASOR* 266 (1987), 45–58.

⁷⁹I have already noted (above, note 10) that the dating of the sites to the late Byzantine period (6th–early 7th centuries), which is based on reasons offered by Avni (*Map of Har Saggi*, 21), is more convincing than the dating of Haiman. Haiman originally dated the construction of the farms to the end of the Byzantine period (Haiman, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southwest*, 24) and only afterwards changed his mind, proposing a date in the Umayyad period (idem, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southeast*, 16). It seems to me that the finds upon which Haiman bases his claims should be attributed to the end of the use of the farms and not to their beginning.

⁸⁰Haiman, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southwest*, 73; idem, “Preliminary Report of the Western Negev,” 130, fig. 7.

An example of a hamlet of the introverted type is site 218 of the same map.⁸¹ The settlement is built as one continuous block on the southern bank of a wide, intensively farmed riverbed (Fig. 49). The settlement extends over about 0.56 ha and contains seven dwellings, each having a number of rooms and a courtyard. At the fringe of the settlement were found the remains of a winepress, a field tower, and two water cisterns.

The majority of farmhouses of the Negev highlands are of the type known from the Sede Boqer maps, averaging 80 m² in area and three to four rooms per farmhouse. A comparison of the plans of the various farmhouses shows a hierarchy from simple dwellings to more intricate complexes with two to three wings around the courtyard (Fig. 50). These houses are uniform in both plan and construction method and attest to a rather homogeneous society of small farmers.⁸²

The dominant feature on the six maps of the Negev highlands is the large number of seasonal settlement sites. This number increases the further south one moves on the maps. So, for example, on the northern Mount Nafḥa map, forty-five sites of this type were found, constituting about 45 percent of all the sites on the map, in contrast to the map of Mount Saggi, in which all thirty-five sites (100%) are seasonal sites with a seminomadic population. The dating of these sites is fixed to the end of the Byzantine period and continues into the Umayyad period (6th–8th century C.E.). The dwellings at these sites are elliptical or rounded (as can be seen from the aerial photograph of one of them; Fig. 51) and are built of unhewn stones (in contrast to the farmhouses that are rectangular with straight walls built of roughly hewn stones). In some of the seasonal sites, especially in the largest, one or two dwellings were built in the farmhouse design (such as the site of Naḥal 'Oded on the map of Makhtesh Ramon).⁸³

As regards distribution, there is great resemblance between the seasonal settlement sites of the seminomadic population and the hamlets of sedentary inhabitants. The average seasonal site extends over about 0.64 ha and contains about ten dwellings, with an average distance of 14.8 m between them. Such a settlement is site 164 on the Mount Saggi map.⁸⁴ Eight elliptical structures scattered along the riverbed were surveyed on this 0.36 ha site (Fig. 52). The riverbed itself contains remains of farmed terraces, attesting to the fact that the inhabitants of the site were farmers as well as shepherds.

The total absence of villages on the six survey maps of the Negev highlands may be explained by the fact that they actually formed part of the hinterland of a much larger settlement, in this case probably Oboda (map coord. 1282.0228), located near the surveyed area. The topographical location of Oboda is unusual, lying at the edge of a mountain range and ending in a steep slope facing west (Fig. 53).⁸⁵ This location was chosen

⁸¹ Haiman, *Map of Har Ḥamran—Southwest*, 148–50.

⁸² There are exceptions, such as the building discovered at site 243 on Mount Ḥamran (*ibid.*, 162–63). This is a relatively large structure (35 × 35 m) with a central courtyard and two wings standing perpendicular to each other, each wing having seven to eight rooms. This is an exceptional structure in size and plan, and it is possible that it could have functioned as a khan or in some other capacity, although it might be a dwelling of a more successful farmer. Similar remains of a possibly large khan or farmhouse dated to the 4th century have been published by Z. Meshel, "The History of Darb el-Ghaza: The Ancient Road to Eilat and Southern Sinai," *Eretz-Israel* 15 (1981), 366 (in Hebrew).

⁸³ Rosen, *Map of Makhtesh Ramon*, 111–12, site 256.

⁸⁴ Avni, *Map of Har Saggi*, 90–91.

⁸⁵ The most comprehensive description of Byzantine Oboda is still that of Woolley and Lawrence, *Wilderness of Zin*, 3–97.

by the Nabataean founders of Oboda in the early Roman period or even earlier. In the Byzantine period, when Oboda reached the height of its prosperity, most of its houses were built on the western slope of the range, using a construction method today called “habitat,” namely, a stepped structure wherein the foundations of one house rest on the walls of the house beneath it (Fig. 54). At the rear of most of the houses, caves that served various functions, such as wine cellars, were carved into the soft rock. It appears that the integration of caves into houses, together with the security afforded by the slopes of the mountain range, were adequate compensation for the site’s difficult accessibility and topographical limitations. A church and a fortress command the upper end of the mountain range. To the south lies another residential neighborhood, and at the edge of the settlement, five large winepresses and a Byzantine bathhouse.

The size of the settlement and the magnitude of the edifices on the so-called acropolis could give the impression that Oboda was a city. However, closer examination and comparison with other Negev settlements show that this is not so. No systematic archaeological survey has been conducted on the remains of Byzantine Oboda, and it appears that Avraham Negev’s claim that there were 350–400 dwellings there is somewhat exaggerated.⁸⁶ In fact, the site stretches over 8.4 ha, an area similar to that of Nessana, which, according to the Nessana papyri and as mentioned above in the introduction, was explicitly referred to as a “village.”⁸⁷ Both Oboda and Nessana have a so-called acropolis, which distinguishes these sites from other Negev settlements; however, it should be noted that the acropolis in both villages is not Byzantine but rather Nabataean in origin. Therefore, despite impressions to the contrary, I believe that Oboda was a large village that served an especially large agricultural hinterland (and included the area of the eight survey maps mentioned above).

Another village, no smaller than Oboda but much less known, is Mezad Yeroḥam (map coord. 1408.0438). The site lies on the southwestern fringes of the large Yeroḥam Plain, about 25 km northeast of Oboda as the crow flies. The site was partly excavated by Rudolph Cohen, but not much of the excavation was published.⁸⁸ According to the excavator, the site stretches over an area of 10 ha and the majority of its dwellings are from the Byzantine period (5th–6th centuries C.E.), among them large orthogonal dwellings each measuring between 500 and 800 m² (Fig. 55). The dimensions of the dwellings, the quality of their construction, and the ornamentation of the lintels found in them attest to the affluence of the site’s inhabitants.

Western Negev

It is agreed that the only *polis* in the Negev, in the full sense of the term, was Elusa.⁸⁹ Joseph Shereshevski correctly notes that Byzantine settlement in the Negev was almost,

⁸⁶ A. Negev, “Oboda,” in *NEAEHL*, III, 1164. Negev’s estimate is based on that of Y. Kedar, *The Ancient Agriculture in the Negev Mountains* (Jerusalem, 1967, in Hebrew), 10.

⁸⁷ On Byzantine Oboda and its precise area, see Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 36–48. Kedar’s estimate that Oboda covers more than 30 ha seems to be completely erroneous (Kedar, *Ancient Agriculture*, 108).

⁸⁸ R. Cohen, “Mezad Yeroḥam,” in *NEAEHL*, III, 1136–37.

⁸⁹ P. Mayerson, “The City of Elusa in the Literary Sources of the Fourth–Sixth Centuries,” *IEJ* 33 (1983), 247–53 (repr. in Mayerson, *Monks, Martyrs, Soldiers and Saracens*, 197–203); Rubin, *Negev*, 25–27. A large and magnificent basilical church was uncovered at Elusa, which, according to Y. Tsafrir (“Christian Archaeology

if not entirely, part of the agricultural hinterland of Elusa.⁹⁰ The wide riverbeds south and southeast of Elusa contained a series of settlements, such as Reḥovot, Sobota, and Sa'adon, that prospered primarily in the Byzantine period.

Reḥovot (map coord. 1085.0489) is located 11 km southwest of Elusa on the main route leading to Nessana and the Sinai. The site, the remains of which have been remarkably well preserved (Fig. 56), spreads over a medium-sized hill rolling south toward the Naḥal Shunra riverbed. Reḥovot is generally circular, extending over about 10 ha, and the density of the houses on the site is overwhelming. In the excavations conducted at the site, under the supervision of Yoram Tsafrir, two churches were exposed, the central one and the northern one (the latter was found outside the area of the settlement), two to three dwelling complexes, and a cemetery located northeast of the settlement.⁹¹ The findings of the excavation have shown that the site was indeed founded in the early Roman period; however, its main prosperity began in the Byzantine period (4th–7th century C.E.). South of the site, remains of a bathhouse and yet another church were found. The dwellings excavated are of the courtyard house type—houses built around an inner courtyard—similar to the large dwellings excavated at Meẓad Yeroḥam.

We can gain a better understanding of the nature of the construction at Reḥovot by comparing it with Sobota (map coord. 1135.0325), located about 17 km east of Reḥovot and about 25 km southeast of Elusa. On the basis of its round shape and the high density of its dwellings (Fig. 57), Sobota resembles Reḥovot, although it is smaller (8.5 ha). Following the studies by Arthur Segal, which are based on the excavations of the Colt Expedition, it is possible to discern the street network of the site, the location of the public buildings, the nature of the dwellings, and the details of the water supply systems and agricultural installations.⁹²

If we define Reḥovot and Sobota as large villages in the district of Elusa, then Sa'adon (map coord. 1124.0487) should be defined as a medium-sized village. This site is located 4 km east of Reḥovot and 9 km south of Elusa on the southern bank of Naḥal Sa'adon, a tributary of Naḥal Shunra (Fig. 58). Sa'adon is unique in that no Nabataean remains, and only fragments of Byzantine pottery and coins, the earliest of which dates from the late fourth century C.E., have been found in the area.⁹³ This means that the site of Sa'adon is the most purely “Byzantine” of all the major sites in the Negev. The density

in Israel in Recent Years,” in *Actes du XIe Congrès international d'archéologie chrétienne* [Rome, 1989], *Studi di antichità cristiana* 41, 1765–67), was the cathedral, i.e., the seat of the bishop, of the western part of Palaestina Tertia (= the Negev). On the position of Elusa, as the possible capital of Palaestina Salutaris, see Y. Dan, “Palaestina Salutaris (Tertia) and Its Capital,” *IEJ* 32 (1982), 134–37.

⁹⁰ Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 134, 216.

⁹¹ Y. Tsafrir and K. Holum, “Reḥovot-in-the-Negev Preliminary Report, 1986,” *IEJ* 38 (1988), 117–27; eidem, “Reḥovot-in-the-Negev,” in *NEAEHL*, IV, 1274–77. An estimation of the area of the site is based on the settlement plan published by Shereshevski (*Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 95). The excavators estimate the settlement's area at 12 ha.

⁹² A. Segal, *The Byzantine City of Shivta (Esbeita), Negev Desert* (Oxford, 1983); and see a short survey by H. D. Colt (“Castles in Zin,” *Archaeology* 1 [1948], 84–91) following his excavations at the site. On the site plan, see B. Brimer, “Shivta: An Aerial Photographic Interpretation,” *IEJ* 31 (1981), 227–29, and on the north church, see S. Margalit, “The North Church of Shivta: The Discovery of the First Church,” *PEQ* 119 (1987), 106–21.

⁹³ Rubin, *Negev*, 145–50. For more information on Sa'adon, see Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 90–93. See also R. Rubin and J. Shereshevski, “Sa'adon: An Urban Settlement of the Byzantine Period in the Negev,” *Qadmoniot* 21 (1988), 49–54 (in Hebrew).

of the dwellings at Sa'adon, as at Rehovot and Sobota, is high. It also has two churches, a public building (perhaps a hospice or a monastery), and many courtyard houses. The area of the site is 2.6 ha, and its contour conforms to the riverbed delimiting it on the north.

On the southern fringes of the site are impressive remains of towered buildings surrounded by a well-built talus (Fig. 59). As discussed below, this tower may have been one of the first structures that was built at the site at the beginning of the Byzantine period and served as the core around which the entire site developed.

In a survey conducted by Rechav Rubin in the area between Sa'adon and Rehovot, several sites were discovered that can be defined as hamlets and farmhouses.⁹⁴ About 2 km east of Sa'adon, a site (map coord. 1145.0490) of about fifteen dwellings of various sizes was discovered. The surveyor defines the site as a "village"; however, it seems that in this case it should be referred to as no more than a hamlet.⁹⁵

Most of the farmhouses surveyed in the Sa'adon region are courtyard houses, relatively large dwellings (500–800 m²) built around a closed inner courtyard. One of the farmhouses, decorated with architectural elements, attests to the affluence of the farm's owner.⁹⁶

The most significant discovery made in the region west of Sa'adon was three "fortified farmhouses," in the words of Rubin, that is, farmhouses at the center of which stands a tower.⁹⁷ These farmhouses are located on both sides of Naḥal Sa'adon about 2 km west of Sa'adon. Because of their importance I conducted a new survey of the sites. The best preserved of the three (Fig. 60) is located on the south bank of Naḥal Sa'adon overlooking the farmland in the riverbed (map coord. 1111.0493).⁹⁸ At the center of the site, about 3 m above the surface, stand the remains of a tower built of well-dressed hewn stones. This edifice (7.4 × 8.6 m) has 1.1 m thick walls and is surrounded by a talus (Fig. 61). North of the tower we located a dwelling directly connected to the tower (on the basis of the quality of the dressing and the large quantity of building stones), and next to it, to the north and northwest, dwelling annexes that apparently belonged to the extended family living at the site. East of the tower is another dwelling annex, and next to it two sheepfolds. Sheepfolds and a stone trough also found in the northwest annex further attest to the agricultural nature of the site. The overall area of the site is about 1,750 m², and its plan indicates spontaneous construction over the years. Rubin suggests that this type of farmhouse with a fortified tower was brought to the area by military settlers, the *limitanei* mentioned in late Byzantine sources; however, this theory cannot be substantiated at present.⁹⁹

As mentioned, two other farmhouses with towers were found on both sides of Naḥal Sa'adon. One is located north of the river, with an area of about 2,500 m². At its center is a tower surrounded by a well-built talus, and here too one finds a number of annexes

⁹⁴ Rubin, *Negev*, 128–45.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 137–41, site 162-49.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 135, site 162-38-1.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 142–45. The existence of these towers is briefly mentioned by Woolley and Lawrence (*Wilderness of Zin*, 113).

⁹⁸ I surveyed the site called Naḥal Sa'adon 2 on January 1, 1995, at which time the remains of the neighboring sites on either side of Naḥal Sa'adon (Naḥal Sa'adon 1 and 3) were measured.

⁹⁹ Rubin, *Negev*, 145. On the status of the *limitanei* in the Negev, see Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 208–13.

built in free fashion around the tower (Fig. 62). The third farmhouse, which is located on the south bank of Naḥal Sa'adon, is smaller (360 m²), and its tower is regular, without a talus (Fig. 63). It appears that the builders of the towered farmhouses knew of more than one type of tower and that their choice depended on the owners' financial means or other factors, such as different masonry schools or different dates. This architectural variety reflects the diversity of rural settlements in general, as is demonstrated in the following discussion.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RURAL SETTLEMENT

The first and most pronounced feature emerging from the survey of rural sites in Byzantine Palestine is the high degree of diversity of size, type, and internal composition of the settlements. The Hebrew poet Nathan Alterman wrote that "reality has a rich imagination, and reality itself is not poor." With these words in mind, one should imagine the complex reality of Byzantine village life, as every village and farmhouse has its own personal story. Because of the complexity of the subject, one must at times make generalizations and, at the same time, attempt to categorize phenomena, albeit tentatively.

The typical village in Byzantine Palestine was the introverted village.¹⁰⁰ Dispersed villages, whose houses are spaced far apart, or hamlets, which are merely clusters of farmhouses, did exist; however, it seems that these sites reflect a transitional phase of small settlements in the process of grouping into villages. Such a process is evident, for example, at Kafr Naffakh in the Golan Heights, which changed from a dispersed village to an introverted one. An introverted village could also develop from a single farmhouse. Such was the case of Ḥorvat Din'ila in Upper Galilee, which, from a single farmhouse, developed into a very compact village. It therefore appears that the dense construction of houses derived not from a lack of space but rather from the deliberate choice of the local population. This conclusion, however, can be substantiated only by further excavations.¹⁰¹

The majority of village dwellers earned their living as farmers, cultivating grain, vegetables, grapes, and olives, herding sheep, and raising cattle.¹⁰² Numerous presses for wine and oil attest to large-scale production of these commodities. In some villages and

¹⁰⁰ Dan, "Social Reality," 257; Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*, 239; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 115.

¹⁰¹ Ma'oz defines the dispersed village as one composed of farmhouses in which the later building additions created its winding alleys (Ma'oz, "Golan," 538). In fact, the final outcome of this type was the introverted village. As noted above, the average distance between the farmhouses of the various hamlets is 26 m.

¹⁰² On the main sources of livelihood in the village, see S. Dar, "Food and Archaeology in Romano-Byzantine Palestine," in *Food in Antiquity*, ed. J. Wilkins, D. Harvey, and M. Dobson (Exeter, 1995), 326–35, and Patlagean, *Pauvreté économique*, 246; see also A. H. M. Jones, *The Decline of the Ancient World* (London-New Haven, Conn., 1966), 299–301; F. M. Heichelheim, "Roman Syria," in *An Economic Survey of Ancient Rome*, ed. T. Frank (New York, 1975), 127–44. See also R. Sallares, *The Ecology of the Ancient Greek World* (Ithaca, 1991), 287–97. The basic food was common to most of the people all over the empire; see A. Kazhdan and G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium: An Introduction to Modern Byzantine Studies* (Washington, D.C., 1982), 55. Documents from medieval Greece show that agricultural production basically did not change; see A. E. Laiou-Thomadakis, *Peasant Society in the Late Byzantine Empire: A Social and Demographic Study* (Princeton, 1977), 30–32, 173–75. On raising sheep and cattle, see Horwitz, Tchernov, and Dar, "Subsistence and Environment on Mount Carmel," 297–303.

estates, there is also evidence of more specialized pursuits, such as fish farming, weaving, pottery and glass production, copper and lead mining (in the Hermon), and more.¹⁰³

Village dwellings may be divided into two main categories: simple houses built next to a courtyard and courtyard houses. Courtyard houses are characteristic primarily of the villages in the Negev as they are more suited to the harsh climatic conditions there.¹⁰⁴ In most of the houses one finds later building additions or internal divisions designed to meet the needs of growing family units over several generations. The final result is the village whose houses create an architectural continuum and at the center of which stands a public building (either a synagogue or a church) for cult purposes.

The villages vary in size, from small villages such as Ḥorvat Din'ila with an area of 0.8 ha, to the very large villages in the south with areas up to 8–10 ha. Most villages were built on top of a hill or along a slope—the places least suitable for farming. The water supply in most of the villages was collected in cisterns.¹⁰⁵ Only at a few sites, such as Qaṣrin in the Golan Heights and Chorazin in Galilee, was spring water in or near the village utilized. In the Negev settlements, public water reservoirs were built, in addition to private cisterns and deep wells dug 60–80 m into the ground, to ensure a constant water supply throughout the year.¹⁰⁶

In most villages the houses were built relatively close together, with narrow alleys (2–3 m) separating them.¹⁰⁷ In none of the villages did we find a street proper, that is, a planned street with a row of shops. In this regard the villages of Byzantine Palestine resemble those of Syria, which also, according to Georges Tate, had only passages and alleys.¹⁰⁸ Some of the larger villages, such as Chorazin and Khirbet Susiya in Judea, had a main thoroughfare cutting across the settlement; however, in these instances as well, it was not a paved street with shops, but simply a wide passageway.

The absence of a street network indicates a lack of planning, or, according to François Villeneuve with regard to the villages of the Hauran, anarchy and disorder in their inter-

¹⁰³ On the specialized sources of livelihood in various villages, see Dan, "Social Reality," 259; Rubin, *Negev*, 55. For local trade in the Galilee, see D. Adan-Bayewitz and I. Perlman, "The Local Trade of Sepphoris in the Roman Period," *IEJ* 40 (1990), 153–72, and R. A. Horsley, "Archaeology and the Villages of Upper Galilee: A Dialogue with Archaeologists," *BASOR* 297 (1995), 11.

¹⁰⁴ Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 73–79. On the climatic need for the courtyard house in the Negev, see Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 149. On the houses at Nessana as courtyard houses, see H. D. Colt, *Excavations at Nessana*, I (London, 1962), 8–9.

¹⁰⁵ Ḥorvat Zikhrin, the area of which is 3 ha, has fifty-three water cisterns with an overall volume of 3,750 m³; see Z. Tsuk, "Survey of Water Cisterns," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 99 (1993), 41. Water cisterns existed in the courtyard of every house in the Negev, as can be seen, for example, in the excavations at Reḥovot: Tsafrir and Holum, "Reḥovot-in-the-Negev," 1274; and at Nessana: Colt, *Nessana*, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 189–94; Rubin, *Negev*, 125–27.

¹⁰⁷ Information regarding the average width of the alleys (2–3 m) is based on a number of examples, such as Tirat Hacarmel (D. Lipkonski, "Tirat Hacarmel," *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 101–2 [1994], 45), in which a 1.9–2.2 m wide alley was found; and Ḥorvat Kanaf (Ma'oz, "Kanaf, Ḥorvat," 849), in which a paved 3 m wide alley was found. On the width of alleys, see Safrai, *Economy*, 46. Colt appears to be correct in his description of Byzantine Nessana as a site that "followed the usual haphazard eastern system with many blind alleys" (*Nessana*, 7).

¹⁰⁸ Tate, *Campaignes*, 224; see also Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 115. It is a matter of interest that even large villages or towns such as Umm el-Gimal in the Hauran had lanes and alleys instead of "urban" streets; see B. de Vries, "Urbanization in the Basalt Region of North Jordan in Late Antiquity: The Case of Umm el-Jimal," in *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan*, II (as above, note 12), 254.

nal planning.¹⁰⁹ This lack of planning of the Byzantine village has additional dimensions: for example, most of the Byzantine villages, hamlets, and farmhouses in Palestine were unwall settlements.¹¹⁰ The isolated instances of villages enclosed by a wall, such as Ḥorvat Batta in Lower Galilee, are exceptions to the rule.¹¹¹

The absence of fortification does not contradict the natural desire of the villagers to defend their villages against local bandits or attacks of nomads (*razzias*). Rabbinic sources describe an open village as “a village (= ‘ir) whose house-roofs form its wall” (*M. Arakhin* 9:6), that is, an introverted village whose outermost houses are attached to each other, creating a section of continuous defense wall.¹¹² In fact, excavations at Khirbet Susiya have yielded a 200 m long continuous section of its outermost dwellings; the rest of the village, however, is completely open.¹¹³

Another expression of the lack of planning is the absence of fixed rules pertaining to the distribution of public and private buildings within the village. For the most part, the synagogue or church seems to be located in the middle of the village; however, judging from the large number of exceptions, it appears that this was not a compulsory rule. So, for example, the synagogue at Khirbet Susiya is located at the western end of the site, while the church at Teqoa in Judea is located next to its northern periphery. Moreover, the rabbinic ruling that synagogues should be built “only at the highest point of the village (= ‘ir)” (*T. Megillah* 3:23) was not always observed, as is evident at the synagogue of Arbel in Lower Galilee.¹¹⁴ The Sages’ statement may have been merely a recommendation and not a command.

The absence of fixed rules also applies to the distribution of the houses in the village, where most of the construction conformed to the local topography and the guiding principle of “the convenience of disorder” seems to have been the norm.¹¹⁵ Nevertheless,

¹⁰⁹Villeneuve, “L’Économie rurale,” 84. At times, an illusion of straight streets is created at rural sites, usually stemming from the orientation of the houses’ facades in one direction due to climatic considerations. On this phenomenon in Syria, see Tate, *Campagnes*, 224. This illusion led Rubin to write that the course of the streets of Sa’adon is distinguished by its regularity and almost orthogonal plan (Rubin, *Negev*, 148).

¹¹⁰Dan, “Social Reality,” 257; Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 146; Kaplan, *Les hommes*, 94.

¹¹¹On the wall encompassing Ḥorvat Batta, see F. Vitto, “Ḥorvat Bata (Karmiel)—1984,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 3 (1984), 8; and M. Aviam, “Galilee,” in *NEAEHL*, II, 453–58. According to the excavator of Tel ‘Ira, the Byzantine settlement on the site was fortified (Beit-Aryieh and Finkelstein, “Tel ‘Ira,” 645); however, at this site one should take into consideration the possibility that the so-called Byzantine wall is no more than the settlement’s wall that existed there beforehand. On fortified villages in Jordan, see Piccirillo, “Rural Settlements in Byzantine Jordan,” 259.

¹¹²Safrai, *Economy*, 46 generally; and Dauphin, “Jewish and Christian Communities,” 132, who describes the settlements in the Golan.

¹¹³Negev (“Khirbet Susiya,” 101) describes Susiya as a fortified settlement; however, an examination of the remains proves otherwise.

¹¹⁴See Z. Ilan, *Ancient Synagogues in Israel* (Tel Aviv, 1991, in Hebrew), 10. It should be noted that the same phenomenon occurred with the first appearance of mosques. For example, in the Negev desert the early mosques were built near the settlements rather than at their centers; see G. Avni, “Early Mosques in the Negev Highlands: New Archaeological Evidence on Islamic Penetration of Southern Palestine,” *BASOR* 294 (1994), 83–100.

¹¹⁵Most scholars agree on the correlation between the distribution of the houses in the village and the local topography; see Yeivin, “Survey of Settlements,” 138–47; B.-Z. Rosenfeld, “The ‘Shekhunah’ (Quarter) in Palestine during the Period of the Talmud, as a Human and Social Territory,” in *Man and Land in Eretz-Israel in Antiquity*, ed. A. Kasher et al. (Jerusalem, 1986, in Hebrew), 61; Ma’oz, “Golan”; Safrai, *Economy*, 46; Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 142. This free attitude and concept characterized the cities in

larger houses, which apparently were the dwellings of the village's wealthy class, were built near the church or synagogue in the middle of the village. An example of this is at Chorazin, where five to six especially large dwelling complexes were found next to the synagogue at its center. Only hints of this phenomenon were found in other villages, such as Ḥorvat Sumaqa on Mount Carmel and Reḥovot-in-the-Negev. For the moment, however, we do not have enough parallels to define this trend as a rule.¹¹⁶

Another aspect of this lack of planning in the distribution of private buildings is the absence of set rules regarding burial. At Ḥorvat Zikhrin in Samaria, for instance, three grave sites (trough and cave burials) without boundary walls were found, while on the spur next to Zur Natan graves were found scattered among the various tracts of farmland.¹¹⁷ It appears, therefore, that this same lack of rules characterizing the organization of the village also characterized the place and distribution of burials. An exception to this might be the rule made by the Jewish Hahakha concerning the physical distance between the graves and the settlements, stating that "carcasses, graves, and tanneries may not remain within fifty cubits (= ca. 25 m) of the village (= 'ir)" (*M. Bava Batra* 2:9). As noted below, this rule reflects the Sages' conspicuous awareness of the need for a cleaner and better environment.

Another, more significant, example of the village's lack of planning is the absence of public market squares. Among the many villages known to us, none contains a space that can be interpreted as a market square.¹¹⁸ This phenomenon corresponds well with the

Byzantine Palestine; see Y. Tsafrir, *Eretz Israel from the Destruction of the Second Temple to the Muslim Conquest*, II: *Archaeology and Art* (Jerusalem, 1984, in Hebrew), 317–18.

¹¹⁶The large dwelling complexes of Chorazin were uncovered by Yeivin ("Korazin"). At Ḥorvat Sumaqa, east of the synagogue, part of a large complex of hewn stones was exposed (Dar, "Ḥorvat Summaqa—1988/1989," 25); the excavator raises the possibility that this is part of a public building. At Reḥovot-in-the-Negev, south of the main church, a large, well-built complex was uncovered; the excavators have proposed three interpretations for the complex: barracks, some sort of military camp; a roadside khan; or a dwelling of a wealthy villager; see Tsafrir and Holum, "Reḥovot-in-the-Negev," 1276. Also in the center of Sobota, an especially large house was found that was identified by Segal as "the governor's house"; see Segal, *Byzantine City of Shivta*, 151–60.

¹¹⁷Three grave sites were found at Ḥorvat Zikhrin: one south of the site, the second northeast of it, and the third, including a small mausoleum, northwest of the site; see Fisher, "Khirbet Zikhrin—1984/85," 119. At the spur next to Zur Natan (Ḥorvat Migdal), fenced tracts of farmland were surveyed; in almost each one of them, an interesting combination of a winepress, an oil press, a water cistern, and a grave was found; see Ayalon and Yannai, "Et-Ṭaiyiba Map, Survey." A similar combination of graves among agricultural installations is described by S. Dar (*Landscape and Pattern*, 50, 55–57) at Khirbet Najar and Khirbet el-Buraq. On the dispersion of the graves at Ḥorvat Sumaqa, see Dar, "Khirbet Summaqa—1985," 107. It should be noted that the lack of organization of the cemeteries also characterizes the villages in Syria; see Tate, *Campagnes*, 224. On the other hand, in Reḥovot-in-the-Negev a large cemetery north of the site has been excavated by Tsafrir and Holum ("Reḥovot-in-the-Negev Preliminary Report," 124) and displays evidence of some organization and rules in burial customs.

¹¹⁸At Kafr Naffakh in the Golan, a stone-paved square measuring 18 × 18 m was found on the outskirts of the village; according to the surveyors, it must have served as a marketplace; see Dauphin and Gibson, "Ancient Settlements in Their Landscapes," 13. The problem is that this square is not dated conclusively, and it is not certain that it belongs to Byzantine Kafr Naffakh. In several villages, squares are found next to cult buildings; so, for example, at Chorazin (Yeivin, "Chorazin," 303), at Ḥorvat Kanaf (Ma'oz, "Kanaf, Ḥorvat," 848), and at Capernaum (S. Loffreda, "Kefar Nahum," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 4 [1985], 58–59; idem, "Capernaum," in *NEAEHL*, I, 295–95). However, the small dimensions of these squares and their location next to synagogues do not permit us to view them as squares for commercial activity. Synagogues' squares were probably social gathering places before and after prayer and study.

fact that the villages had no rows of shops. It appears, therefore, that the commercial activity reported in the rabbinic sources may have taken place in shops located in private dwellings, as at Khirbet Susiya. We know that these were shops because they face directly onto the alley as one enters the village from the south.¹¹⁹ Another means of maintaining commercial connections between the cities and the villages was traveling salesmen, or peddlers, who are mentioned several times in rabbinic literature: “vendors who circulate in the villages (= ‘*ayyarot*’).”¹²⁰

Absence of planning indicates both organic growth and a high level of autonomy. Apparently, provincial authorities did not intervene in village affairs and organization, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that this was, in part, the greatness of the empire. Villagers, like urban dwellers, could enjoy a relatively high degree of autonomy as well as the opportunity of attaining their goals in farming, achievements from which the imperial government ultimately benefited.

The autonomy in the internal organization of village life is reflected in its churches and synagogues, whose many dedicatory inscriptions show that they were almost always built by the villagers. The opulence exhibited in these buildings, expressed by their dimensions and interior magnificence, is testimony to the financial prosperity of the village communities in the Byzantine period.¹²¹ In many Christian villages, more than one church was found, and at times monasteries were built on the outskirts of the village.¹²² The whole gamut of issues connected to monasteries and to the cult of the saints, which held a very important role in the life of the Christian village in the Byzantine period, diverges from the present discussion and is not dealt with here.¹²³ The communal life in Jewish villages centered around the synagogue, which developed into a multifunctional complex, including, in addition to the prayer hall, rooms for study (*batei midrash*), village meetings, and entertainment.¹²⁴

Communal activity also gave rise to rules for preserving the environment. Jewish law required the removal of noxious industrial installations, such as kilns, tanneries, threshing floors, and dovecotes, from residential areas. Mishnaic law states explicitly: “A dove-cote may not be kept within fifty cubits (= ca. 25 m) of a village. . . . A permanent thresh-

¹¹⁹On the shop-dwelling I uncovered at Khirbet Susiya and on the integration of shops in private construction, see Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 98–99.

¹²⁰*J. Ma'aserot* 2, 49b; see Safrai, *Economy*, 77–78.

¹²¹Dan, “Social Reality,” 266.

¹²²A good example of this is Ḥorvat Batta near Carmiel in Lower Galilee, where five churches were found—two in the village and three outside it—in addition to the monastery found there (Aviam, “Galilee”). At Ḥorvat Ḥesheq in Upper Galilee, a monastery built by a well-to-do Christian family from the neighboring village, Ḥorvat Mahoz, was discovered; see M. Aviam, “Ḥorvat Ḥesheq—A Unique Church in Upper Galilee: Preliminary Report,” in *Christian Archaeology in the Holy Land: New Discoveries*, ed. G. C. Bottini et al. (Jerusalem, 1990), 351–78, regarding the site; and L. Di Segni, “Ḥorvat Ḥesheq: The Inscriptions,” *ibid.*, 379–90, regarding the dedicatory inscription found in it.

¹²³See the classic paper by P. Brown, “The Rise and the Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity,” *JRS* 61 (1971), 80–101.

¹²⁴Safrai, *Economy*, 53–54. On the existence of *batei midrash* (study houses) and instruction in Jewish villages, see Millar, *The Roman Near East*, 382–83. In the courtyards of not a few synagogues, such as that of Khirbet Marus in Upper Galilee (Z. Ilan and E. Damati, “Meroth (Kh. Marus)—1986,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 5 [1986], 67–68) or that of Arbel in Lower Galilee (Ilan and Izderechet, “Arbel,” 89), rooms that served as *batei midrash* and/or for other communal purposes were found.

ing floor may not be made within fifty cubits from the village.” Similar rules applied to carcasses, graves, and tanneries, as mentioned above.¹²⁵ These and similar laws attest to the keen ecological awareness of the Jewish and perhaps also non-Jewish villagers in the Roman period, which was most probably based on extensive life experience. Archaeological finds indicate that such rules were, in fact, observed. At Ḥorvat Sumaqa on Mount Carmel and at Khirbet el-Buraq in Samaria, for instance, industrial areas were located beyond the residential districts; at Sa’adon in the Negev, several limekilns were found concentrated in the area east of the settlement, so that their smoke would be carried away by the prevailing west winds.¹²⁶

Another archaeological expression of the villagers’ autonomy in communal planning in an effort to improve their quality of life is the paving of the village’s alleys. At several sites, such as Ḥermeshit and Qedumim in Samaria or Qaṣrin in the Golan, the excavators found alleys paved with small stone slabs or layers of crushed limestone,¹²⁷ probably to protect pedestrians from the mud in the rainy winter months. Most likely, the paving was planned and executed at the initiative of the local villagers, without any outside intervention.

One of the most fascinating phenomena of village life recently coming to light is the construction of small bathhouses in or near the village. This practice was common in the villages of northern Syria and the Hauran; however, in the rural settlements of Palestine it has not been given much scholarly attention to date.¹²⁸ Recently, remains of bathhouses have been found at various sites, such as Ḥorvat Zikhrin and Ḥorvat Migdal in western Samaria, Pardessiya and a site near the Gelilot junction on the coastal plain, Capernaum

¹²⁵ *M. Bava Batra* 2:5–9. Of a life experience that brought about changes in the *halakha* we learn from a similar tradition in the Jerusalem Talmud, in which the rabbis argue over the question of whether an oil press and a winepress are allowed to be located in the village confines or not: “‘One does not make in them [in villages] neither an oil press nor wine cellar,’ says Rabbi Nehemiah. And the rabbis allow it” (*J. Makkot* 2, 7, 31d). The archaeological reality proves that presses for oil and for wine were integrated among the village’s houses, as, for example, at Ḥorvat Karkara and Ḥorvat Din’ila in western Galilee, or at Khirbet Najjar in western Samaria, and because of this reality the rabbis permitted it. On these enactments and their application in the Jewish village, see Safrai, *Economy*, 46. For the Roman law on protecting the environment, see H. Bender, “Historical Environmental Research from the Viewpoint of Provincial Roman Archaeology,” in *Evaluation of Land Surfaces Cleared from Forests in the Mediterranean Region during the Time of the Roman Empire*, ed. B. Frenzel (Stuttgart, 1994), 147–51.

¹²⁶ On the industrial areas at Ḥorvat Sumaqa, see Dar, “Khirbet Summaqa—1983/1984,” 101–2, and at Khirbet el-Buraq, see Dar, *Landscape and Pattern*, 58–59. The limekilns east of Sa’adon were discovered by Rubin and Shereshevski, “Sa’adon: An Urban Settlement,” 54; Rubin, *Negev*, 149. Ḥorvat Zikhrin is another example of placement of agricultural installations outside the settlement’s limits; see Fisher, “Khirbet Zikhrin—1984,” 114. In contrast, at Qedumim, oil presses were found together with dwellings: I. Magen, “Qedumim,” in *NEAEHL*, IV, 1225–27. We may therefore surmise that these were not hard-and-fast rules.

¹²⁷ On the paved alleys at Ḥermeshit, see Iron-Lubin, “H. Ḥermeshit,” 72; at Qaṣrin, see Ma’oz and Killebrew, *Qaṣrin*, 13; and at Qedumim in Samaria, see I. Magen, “Qedumim,” *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 1 (1982), 99.

¹²⁸ On bathhouses in villages in the Hauran, see Villeneuve, “L’économie rurale,” 85. In northern Syria, rural bathhouses were found in an excellent state of preservation, as at Bard; see J. B. Ward-Perkins, *Roman Imperial Architecture* (London, 1970), 326–27. The rural bathhouse is mentioned in historical sources; see Dan, “Social Reality,” 258. Rural bathhouses have been surveyed in northern Tunisia, by C. G. Hansen, “Architectural Studies,” in *Africa Proconsularis: Regional Studies in the Segermes Valley of Northern Tunisia*, ed. S. Dietz, L. L. Sebaï, and H. Ben Hassen (Copenhagen, 1995), 361–63. I wish to thank Leslie Dossey who brought my attention to this discovery.

on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and elsewhere.¹²⁹ These discoveries join the series of village bathhouses known to us earlier at Kafr er-Rameh in Upper Galilee and at some of the larger Negev villages, such as Rehovot and Oboda.¹³⁰

The bathhouse at Oboda is interesting because of its location and excellent state of preservation. Located in a flat area west of Oboda, not far from the main road, the bath could supply its services to the inhabitants of Oboda as well as to the neighboring hamlets and farmhouses and to occasional transients.

The existence of rural bathhouses is an indication of the urban character acquired by some of the villages in this period; it is known that the bathhouse was much more than a place for bathing. It offered the villagers and inhabitants of the remote farms an opportunity to socialize and enjoy pampering the body. It is safe to assume that the proprietor of the rural bathhouse was a private individual who charged an entrance fee.¹³¹ We may thus conclude that villagers in the Byzantine period could afford to pay for the pleasures of the bathhouse—additional testimony to the financial prosperity of the rural settlers during this period.

Another public building known in several villages in northern Syria is the *andron*, a special building that functioned as a meeting place for the men of the village, for a banquet or social gathering.¹³² The typical *andron* of Syria (identified by inscriptions) is a rectangular structure without internal division and is distinguished by the high quality of its construction. Did the villages of Palestine have a similar structure? The answer to this question is not simple because, even if there were such a building, in most cases we would have difficulty identifying it.

Nevertheless, there are a number of sites in the Negev at the center of which was found a rectangular structure without internal division that differed from the rest of the village houses. This phenomenon is especially pronounced among the seasonal settlement sites of the seminomadic population, whose houses are elliptical. A good example of this is the site of Naḥal 'Oded in the Negev highlands, a large seasonal site containing a few dozen elliptical dwellings. At its center is a rectangular structure of exceptional quality relative to the other village structures.¹³³ The absence of internal division in the

¹²⁹Small bathhouses were discovered recently at Ḥorvat Zikhrin (Fisher, "Khirbet Zikhrin—1984," 113), at Horvat Migdal (Ayalon, Neidinger, and Matthews, "Ḥorvat Migdal," 137), at Pardessiya (Yannai and Ayalon, "Pardessiya"), at a site at the Gelilot junction north of Tel Aviv (Y. Levy, "Gelilot [Kh. Jalil]," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 10 [1991], 121), at Baqa' el-Gharbiya in the northern Sharon (R. Bedihi and A. Boshnino, "Baqa el-Gharbiya," *ibid.*, 10 [1991], 113), and at a Byzantine village northwest of Beersheba (P. Figueras, "Ḥorvat Karkur 'Illit—1989/1990," *ibid.*, 10 [1991], 153). The bathhouse at Capernaum is earlier (from the 1st century C.E.); however, its use continued into the Byzantine period (V. Tzaferis, "Capernaum," in *NEAEHL*, I, 295–96). Another bathhouse was identified at Na'aran in the Golan (C. Dauphin, "Golan Survey—1988," *Excavations and Surveys in Israel* 9 [1989–90], 6).

¹³⁰The bathhouse at Kafr er-Rameh in Upper Galilee was uncovered in 1972; see V. Tzaferis, "A Roman Bath at Rama," *Atiqot* 14 (1980), 66–75. On the bathhouses at Rehovot and Oboda, see Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 195–98.

¹³¹On the existence of small private bathhouses among the villages of northern Syria during the Byzantine period, see F. Yegül, *Baths and Bathing in Classical Antiquity* (New York, 1992), 329–38.

¹³²Tate, *Campagnes*, 72–78.

¹³³Rosen, *Map of Makhtesh Ramon*, 111–12. Another building that I suggest should be considered an *andron* is Building 49-6, which was part of a site east of Sa'adon surveyed by Rubin (*Negev*, 137–41), according to whom this is a rectangular structure with no internal division and where a number of well-made architect-

building's plan reinforces the assumption that it functioned as a public building serving some purpose, perhaps social gatherings and entertainment. Its construction resembles that of the *andron* or public hall common in the villages of northern Syria. In Arab cultures, this structure still functions today as the *madafeh*.¹³⁴

In the number of dwelling units, hamlets fall between villages and single farmhouses. Negev desert surveys show villages, hamlets, and farmhouses located next to each other. Most hamlets were comprised of clusters of farmhouses scattered randomly over a given area. It is probable that many hamlets developed from one dwelling occupied by a single core family that grew over time. Hamlets, like farmhouses, were found in isolated areas, indicating the high level of security that prevailed in Byzantine Palestine. Apparently, when farmers felt safe they preferred to leave their villages and move closer to their tracts of land in order to save travel time between home and field.¹³⁵

The hamlets were offshoot settlements; each was linked to a mother village that supplied its inhabitants with the vital religious and professional services, such as blacksmiths and cobblers.¹³⁶ Areas of Jewish settlement in eastern Galilee and the Golan do not contain hamlets or farmhouses. Jewish life revolved around its main communal institution, the synagogue, for daily prayer and for Torah reading on the Sabbath and on holidays; Jews therefore could not live far from a communal framework such as the village. This phenomenon implies a distinct social organization that dictated a different settlement pattern for the Jewish rural population in Byzantine Palestine. Archaeological evidence shows that the Samaritan pattern of settlement followed the Jewish pattern, at least from the fourth century C.E.¹³⁷ In contrast, there was an abundance of hamlets and farmhouses in the areas settled by Christians in western Galilee, on the coastal plain, in the Judean hills, and in the Negev.

Rural Byzantine Palestine is also characterized by the great architectural diversity of its farmhouses. Two major types of farmhouses appear in the survey: the simple and the complex. The simple farmhouse is a rectangular structure of two or three rooms facing a fenced courtyard oriented east or south. This orientation corresponds to winter climatic conditions, allowing the dwelling to absorb maximum sunlight and heat while avoiding

tural elements were found. Examination of the remains in situ exhibits a very poor state of preservation, and it is doubtful whether one could draw any conclusions from the few remains there.

¹³⁴On the *madafeh* of the traditional Arab village, see Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 206–11.

¹³⁵On the reasons for the creation of hamlets in Palestine, see Safrai, *Economy*, 71–73. According to Tate (*Campaigns*, 209), the hamlets were essentially part of the agricultural base of the village. Jones has suggested that large farms within the village limits became hamlets because the landowners preferred to house their tenants near the tracts of land; see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 788. Nevertheless, it is doubtful whether this process, which is based on Egyptian sources (papyri), is valid with regard to hamlets in Palestine. In the hamlets of the Negev, there is no indication of a superior authority imposing construction on the villagers; rather, the opposite seems to have been the case: the hamlets developed “internally,” i.e., naturally, over a number of generations. This development is well known all over the country; see I. W. J. Hopkins, “The City Region in Roman Palestine,” *PEQ* 113 (1980), 19–20.

¹³⁶A complete smithy, which was part of a Byzantine village, was uncovered recently in western Galilee; see M. Aviam and N. Gitzov, “Ḥorvat ‘Ovesh,” *Hadashot Arkheologiyot* 103 (1995), 14–16 (in Hebrew).

¹³⁷On this phenomenon, see Y. Hirschfeld, “Jewish Rural Settlement” (Ann Arbor, forthcoming). This phenomenon explains why words in Mishnaic Hebrew denoting “hamlet” or “farm” (above, note 18) are rare.

exposure to cold winter winds, usually from the north or northwest.¹³⁸ Hundreds of farmhouses of this type were found especially in the peripheral areas, in the Negev and the fringe zone of the Judean desert, as well as in other areas of the country. This is the basic farming unit of the small farmer which is known from different places and times in all parts of the world.¹³⁹ The simplicity of these structures derives from the limited means at the disposal of the small farmers. A comparison of the plans of the simple farmhouses surveyed in the Negev and Judean deserts indicates their high degree of uniformity in different geographical regions.¹⁴⁰

It was found that, in some cases, the simple farmhouse was built from the outset as a structure with two perpendicular wings. In other cases it appears that the two-wing structure was built over time to accommodate the natural growth of the farmer's family and also as the result of economic prosperity.¹⁴¹ The existence of different-sized farmhouses next to each other may indicate that some of the small farmers had established themselves financially while others had not.

The complex farmhouse is a large, architecturally structured complex with a purely agrarian character. In these houses lived the established landowners about whom we read in the sources. The most common complex farmhouse is the courtyard house with wings built around a closed inner courtyard. This type of dwelling, distinguished by its precise planning and quality construction, was found, for example, at Ramat Hanadiv near Caesarea or on the summit of Har Bariaḥ in the south. Ranging between 250 and 600 m² (including the area of the courtyard), the courtyard houses are usually internally divided into two stories: the ground floor served the needs of the farm, and the upper story was used for living space.¹⁴² Monasteries discovered throughout Palestine were sometimes built according to a similar plan, thereby making it difficult at times to identify these structures and distinguish them from complex farmhouses.¹⁴³

¹³⁸On the importance of climatic considerations in planning dwellings, see Shereshevski, *Byzantine Urban Settlements*, 18–19. According to Tate (*Campagnes*, 224), the house facades in Syria also face the sun. For a similar phenomenon as reflected in my survey of private building in modern-day traditional Arab villages, see Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 137–38.

¹³⁹There are endless examples of simple rectangular structures typifying the house of the small farmer in different periods and places throughout the world. So, for example, the Anglo-Saxon farmhouses were built in England in the Middle Ages; see A. Butler, *Old English Farmhouses* (London, 1992), 12.

¹⁴⁰According to Haiman (*Map of Har Hamran—Southwest*, 20), the dimensions of the rooms in the farmhouses of the Negev are almost always 3.5 × 5 m. The fixed width of the building was dictated by the length of the wooden beams available to the builders; see Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling*, 238–39.

¹⁴¹It is probable, as suggested by Tate (*Campagnes*, 186), that a one- or two-room house was used by the core family, while houses with four and more rooms were used by the extended family. Ethnoarchaeological studies conducted in Iran have shown that the size of the house and the number of rooms are a direct reflection of the wealth and property of the house owner; see Horne, "Reading Village Plans," 49. See also Mershem, "Settlement History and Village Space," 411–12, for the same phenomenon in Jordan.

¹⁴²A similar division into two stories is known in the villages of Syria (Tate, *Campagnes*, 5) and the Hauran (Villeneuve, "L'économie rurale," 98).

¹⁴³P. V. Corbo (*Gli scavi di Kh. Siyar el-Ghanam (Campo dei pastori) e i monasteri dei dintorni* [Jerusalem, 1955], 2) discusses the resemblance between the communal monasteries (*coenobia*) and the *villa rustica* observed during his excavations in the Bethlehem area. The main means of differentiating between monasteries and complex farmhouses is by the church, a critical component of every monastery that never appeared in the farmhouse in Palestine. The problem is that we are not always able to identify the existence of the church, which in some monasteries was located in their upper story. In this kind of situation, as at the site excavated

Another type of complex farmhouse includes a tower at its center or in one of its wings. Good examples of this were found at Ḥorvat Ḥazzan on the inner coastal plain of Judea, on the eastern fringes of the Hebron hills, and in the Negev near Sa'adon. The towers in these complexes are massive structures with walls at least 1 m thick, surrounded by a well-built talus. Most of them were internally divided into two or three rooms. Elaborate farmhouses, or estate manors, with one or two towers were common in the Roman-Byzantine period. On mosaic floors, such as those discovered at Tabarka in Tunisia, one can see the shape of one of these manors with two towers and, between them, living quarters and a portico (Fig. 64).¹⁴⁴ The design of such towered complexes does not necessarily reflect the influence of military architectural design; in fact, there is no military fort or fortress of this shape among the many forts of the Roman *limes* that are known.¹⁴⁵ It seems that these towers functioned as the dwellings of estate owners. They may be compared to the famous towers built on the Mani peninsula in Greece in the seventeenth to eighteenth century that were constructed as part of the dwelling complex in which the *kapetanoi* and heads of powerful families lived.¹⁴⁶

Do the towered farmhouses of Byzantine Palestine represent a specific social class? Rechav Rubin, who investigated the "fortified farmhouses" (as he calls them) near Sa'adon, has suggested they were dwelling complexes of military settlers, the *limitanei* of the Byzantine sources;¹⁴⁷ however, at present there is no way of proving this. One may suggest, with an equal degree of certainty, that the model of the towered farmhouse was adopted by civilian landowners who had no military background.

The most impressive type of complex farmhouse found in Palestine is the enormous "industrial estate," the most beautiful example of which is the site exposed north of Ashkelon as well as part of the site north of Caesarea.¹⁴⁸ The so-called third mile estate near

by Dauphin near Shelomi in Upper Galilee, I believe the building should be interpreted as a monastery with its church on the upper floor, and not as a "farmhouse of a monastery," as proposed by the excavator (C. M. Dauphin, "A Seventh Century Measuring Rod from the Ecclesiastical Farm at Shelomi in Western Galilee [Israel]," *JÖB* 32.3 [1982], 513–22).

¹⁴⁴A. G. McKay, *Houses, Villas and Palaces in the Roman World* (London, 1975), 234–35. See also K. M. D. Dunbabin, *The Mosaics of Roman North Africa: Studies in Iconography and Patronage* (Oxford, 1978), 122–23, and T. Sarnowski, *Les représentations de villas sur les mosaïques africaines tardives* (Wrocław, 1978), 42–44. On the distribution of dwellings with towers in antiquity, see M. Nowicka, *Les maisons à tour dans le monde grec* (Warsaw, 1975); regarding their function in the Roman East, see R. MacMullen, *Soldier and Civilian in the Later Roman Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.-London, 1963), 141–47. Well-preserved fortified farmhouses are known in Libya; see D. J. Mattingly and R. B. Hitcher, "Roman Africa: An Archaeological Review," *JRS* 85 (1995), 195.

¹⁴⁵See, for example, S. T. Parker, "The Typology of Roman and Byzantine Forts and Fortresses in Jordan," *Studies in the History and Archaeology of Jordan* 5 (1994), 251–60.

¹⁴⁶Y. Saïtas, *Mani* (Athens, 1990), 60. A comparison between the present-day Mani region and the peripheral regions of Byzantine Palestine, primarily in the Negev, reveals common features regarding security, isolation, and rural landscape. It appears not to be coincidental that similar dwelling forms developed in the two regions. Farmhouses fortified with towers are also known from medieval Sicily and Greece; see G. Valussi, *La casa rurale nella Sicilia occidentale* (Florence, 1968), 89, and P. Lock, "The Towers of Euboea: Lombard or Venetian, Agrarian or Strategic," in *The Archaeology of Medieval Greece*, ed. P. Lock and G. D. R. Sanders (Oxford, 1996), 118–19. I wish to thank Erik Neil and David Jacoby, respectively, who brought these sources to my attention.

¹⁴⁷Rubin, *Negev*, 142. On the settlement of the *limitanei* on the borders of the East from the 5th century on, see Jones, *Later Roman Empire*, 649–54; and specifically regarding the Negev, see Isaac, *Limits of Empire*, 208–9.

¹⁴⁸See above, notes 49–50.

Ashkelon was designed as a self-sufficient unit that grew, processed, and marketed its own products by efficiently recycling production materials. The estate produced wine and oil for export in clay jars manufactured in very large workshops on the premises. The kilns of these workshops were probably fueled by the waste products of squeezed olives or the cuttings from vines and olive trees. The proprietors lived in a dwelling apparently located above the storehouses where the wine jars were kept. Next to the storehouses was a bathhouse for the owners' use, and next to it ponds for fish spawning that utilized the surplus water from the bathhouse.

The industrial estate represents the large landowners who, according to the sources, accumulated property and had high social standing. It is not coincidental that the two known examples were found along the Via Maris, not far from the important ports of Ashkelon and Caesarea. The main source of livelihood of these villa owners was the marketing and export of farm produce, such as good-quality wine and oil.¹⁴⁹ The complex north of Ashkelon is, in my opinion, one of the outstanding social and economic achievements of the Byzantine period in Palestine, demonstrating remarkable economic prosperity achieved through farming and processing of agricultural produce.

CONCLUSION

Any attempt to sketch a profile of rural settlement in Byzantine Palestine is not an easy task. First of all, one is dealing with a large area composed of three provinces: Palaestina Prima, whose capital was Caesarea; Palaestina Secunda, whose capital was Bet Shean (Scythopolis); and Palaestina Tertia, whose capital was perhaps Elusa. Second, this area is not only large but also very diverse, both climatically and ethnically. As a result, a survey of rural settlements from the verdant Galilee down to the arid Negev highlands presents a large variety of types that differ in the levels of settlement and their distribution and size. However, this variety is not simply an expression of topographical and climatic conditions, but also, if not primarily, of the great need for rural settlement in Palestine in the period under discussion.

The village, together with the surrounding hamlets and farmhouses, was an economically independent unit based on the main source of wealth in antiquity—land. The autonomy found in the structure of the village and in the distribution of its houses is an expression of the degree of independence and freedom of activity enjoyed by the farmers. These free farmers who populated most of the villages of Byzantine Palestine could give full expression to both their diligence and experience gained over generations of working the land and reaping its harvests. The prosperity of the villages and their expansion were not possible without stability and familial continuity, a fact known primarily from evidence found in the Negev regions, where village life continued until the end of the Umayyad period.

Especially impressive are the large villages that flourished and prospered in the Byzantine period. With regard to size and public construction, such as bathhouses, these villages were perceived as small cities; however, with regard to their internal organization they were essentially still villages, introverted settlements of dwellings and ritual edifices

¹⁴⁹Heichelheim, "Roman Syria," 138–40.

(a synagogue or a church, at times more than one church) separated by alleys and narrow passageways. One would not be far off the mark in saying that the Muslim city of the East is closer in shape and internal structure to the large villages of the Byzantine period than to the *poleis* of the Hellenistic-Roman era.

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